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© NUNO LARANJEIRA

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© TOOFAST MEDIA GROUP



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COMMENT

They often say that championships are won on riders' bad days and as an off-road enthusiast it's easy for me to back that 'fact' up by trawling through the old memory banks to pick out a moment or two when someone on their way to becoming a great champion has turned things around when the chips were down.

A personal favourite moment of mine was Dave Thorpe's ride through the pack from 40th to first at Farleigh Castle in 1985. Never the easiest place to make a pass, DT made his way through the field of world championship warriors 'like a hot knife through butter' according to BBC commentator Murray Walker who almost had a meltdown live on air as the action unfolded in front of him.

As things panned out Dave would eventually finish second in that moto – and second overall on the day – to Andre Malherbe but those hard earned 17 points definitely played their part in securing that maiden world title. Had Thorpe thrown a wobbly and pulled out (as Kurt Nicoll did a few years later when his gate failed to drop along with the others at Hawkstone Park) then who knows how many, if any, world titles the Berkshire Bomber would've eventually racked up...

In more recent times two guys who've been able to overcome the odds to keep on winning have been 2015 MXGP supremo Romain Febvre (although that luck apparently ran dry at this year's British GP) and this year's champion elect Tim Gajser. Febvre's ride at Maggiora last year with a twisted bike was the stuff of legend and Gajser just seems able to keep on crashing and coming back, crashing and coming back – literally nothing can hold him back!

Currently sat on a 92-point lead in the premier class the 19-year-old Slovenian definitely deserves to take this year's MXGP title. I only hope I haven't cursed him by highlighting his ability to roll with the punches – mostly because I don't want HRC's head honcho Roger Harvey hunting me down to extract some serious revenge. That'd be well scary.

Although there's no championship on the line things have been pretty tough for me these last few weeks as ever since the missus took a tumble down the stairs she's been laid up in hospital while I've temporarily become a working lone parent with four kids and what feels like a million and one print titles on the go. Fortunately, Rebecca's on the mend now and we're through the worst of it so it's back on the gas and flat out towards the finish line once more.

But while learning how to iron creases in school uniforms at the same time as keeping the little ones fed, cleaned, clothed, entertained and watered – you do water kids to make them grow, right? – I found that properly caring for a litter of rugrats is bloody hard work. It's maybe not quite as hard as winning a motocross world championship but it's equally as dirty and potentially way more dangerous.

So to all the parents out there I dedicate this Summer issue of DBR to you. If you've had a hard day working and looking after the nippers then it's time to sit down, relax and have a good long read – you definitely deserve it! And, since it's the summer holidays you can relax knowing full well that there are no school uniforms to iron in time for the morning – double bonus!

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TONY CAIROLI



TONY FEELS THE HEAT IN MANTOVA BUT IS ECSTATIC WITH THE OVERALL OUTCOME . . .

Hi folks and welcome back to my little slice of DBR! It's finally summer time and it's time for holidays! Well, I mean for most people it is, or it will soon be anyway! For us MXGP riders it's not!

I have raced the Motocross World Championship since 2004 and I think that in all that time I have never had three weeks free, in a row, in the middle of the summer! Our break is always a little earlier before the kids break up.

Don't get me wrong, it was nice and it gives the time to some of the people involved with one of the many jobs in the paddock, to rest a little bit, to put the stress away and to have some time to spend with their families.

In the last few years our lives have been getting busier and busier with more GPs added almost every year and more overseas travel to do. So a little break was helpful for everybody.

July is also a special month because it's Jill's birthday and we always do something special. This time it was a surprise party with some of her best friends and a night in Milan for the Beyoncé live concert.

Last time I was writing for you it was right before the Grand Prix of Mantova, in Italy and I had just been injured at Matterley Basin with a painful fracture in my left hand that was quite annoying. I originally planned to sit it out but decided with my team to race and I also decided to not take pain killers or anything that could take away sensitivity from my hand.

There are two reasons why I took that decision. First of all I wanted to feel my hand

– to feel the pain and be able to understand if I was pushing too hard – so I could avoid aggravating the injury. Sometimes, if you don't feel the pain you can go over the limit which is not ideal when you have still have six GPs to race and you want to fight for the title.

The second reason I rode with the pain was because of the temperature! The Italian weekend was one of the hottest of the last few years and when you take medication it can give more trouble than it's worth. In Mantova we were racing in extreme conditions – hotter than Thailand this year – and it's better to keep all your mental faculties and focus on the fight with your rivals, the track and the heat.

So in Italy we had a tough but very nice race. I was happy even if I did have a slight bitter taste in my mouth from having missed the podium! In the first race I did not have the best possible jump out of the gate and I started last, due to contact with two riders before the first corner. I was properly mad and pushed really hard to come back as fast as I could. I think that I was 13th after the first lap, passing 27 riders in one fell swoop and managed to battle my way right up to sixth place by the end.

In race two I took the holeshot and I had a great battle with Tim, we were giving the best we had, riding super fast, aggressively but always correctly and I think that both the Italian and the Slovenian fans where delighted by it. After the race I went back under the KTM awning and when I met my fans they seemed even more excited than after a victory!

I was surprised but then one of my crew

told me that they were impressed by my determination and willingness to fight while injured and by the fact that I never give up. But for me it's normal, I'm like this and I always have been. I respect my fans and the MX fans in general, they are awesome and they deserve the best show possible, always.

After Mantova we had a nice day of training with the Italian team for the MXoN selection day in Maggiora. It was all Italian riders with the team manager Thomas Traversini and we had a good team building day of riding on a track that is just fantastic now. They have made some modifications and it's wider and longer and I think it will be an epic Motocross of Nations. Now everything is packed for the next stop in Loket, followed by Lommel and then Frauenfeld for three of the last four races of the year in Europe!

I just want to close my monthly column with couple of words about the terrorist attack in France last week. It's something crazy that touches all of us. My team manager and his family were involved and count themselves lucky that they were only wounded with the truck passing 20 centimetres from them. Mine and Jill's hearts go out to all the families of the victims...

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BRYAN

MACKENZIE



THE EARLIEST REGULAR TO GET HIS COLUMN IN THIS MONTH, IRN BRY OFFERS UP SOME TIPS ON HOW-TO BEAT OFF YOUR DETRACTORS (NOT LITERALLY) . . .

At 31 years of age I'm still learning. I'm still learning exactly when to use commas, the correct context in which to add a '-' to my written work – or in fact any of the little lines, dashes and dots on the keyboard – how to get off a concrete start, who sucks off who in the motocross paddock these days (in the non literal sense), but, most importantly, why not to be late with my DBR column. That picture last month just can't go unmentioned (did I use '-' and ';' correctly there? Honestly, I'm just stabbing in the dark).

I think it was intended as a punishment from the DBR hierarchy for my slack ass missing the deadline but in the end I feel I had the last laugh. I wasn't aware of Sutty's underhand humiliation tactics prior to print and it was only brought to my attention when one of the Apico Factory Racing ballers (the company, not the race team) snapchatted me like, WTF?

So, essentially, it was brought to my attention by one of my superiors – sh*t! Can you imagine the outcome of any other line of work where one of your (dare I say) top employees was to be pictured looking like a 'fairy', semi-nekkid in the industries' only printed publication. I'm sure there would be a disciplinary or a P45 in the following action.

So I was teed up for a heavy shredding courtesy of the editorial team and so I had to jump on the defensive to shut the sh*t-fest down early because what's the best way to stop a slagging in its tracks? Embrace it and show no disheartened emotion – there's no fun in slagging your comrade when he isn't taking it to heart. So when the slagging

cannons started going off and along came the phone calls and comments I was the second best Scotsman in the country at backhanding for a week (behind Andy Murray). Let me show you...

"They're not my shades, they're my wife's. But a real dude can confidently wear his chicks stuff and get away with it though. I mean, I tow the line at underwear, dresses, shoes, make-up, jeans but generic hoodies, socks, hats and shades I'm totally NFG. I'm comfortable with my sexuality to the point that I'll take on those things no sweat."

"Nah, I've not 'let myself go' or need to seek a professional opinion – it's not fat or a hernia. That's a slab of muscle, my man. Ask your chick – she was checking me out for long enough when I was up there."

"Yeah, okay, I've got a receding hairline like Mr Burns but at least when I come out the shower my hair doesn't look like Barney Gumbles every time he gets off the drink. And the only time I use my wife's hairdryer is to put Rockstar Energy Drink stickers onto my helmet – my Leatt one."

"Aye I'm so white I'm virtually see-through so I don't need x-rays when I go to the hospital and I'm in, diagnosed and out in minutes – it's so convenient. That's why I'm wrapping my sun-proof cape around myself. So I like being white, bro. It's more unique to be the colour I am than tanned nowadays anyway and I feel it just keeps me closer to my Scottish, ginger skinned roots."

"It's pretty fitting though that I'm wearing a Irn-Bru cape though, right? That is legitimately an Irn-Bru towel right there. I mean if I was gonna be a super hero I wouldn't be far away with that set-up..."

"Yeah I've missed leg day all season this year, actually. Leg day is on a Monday at Gym15a but it's such hard goddamn work walking up and down that podium on a Sunday that I'm never fully recovered for Monday's leg sets so I just chill so they're good to go again on the weekend."

"Oh, the blue shorts? They aren't photoshopped, no – that's all Bry."

That picture could easily have been a tragedy if I let it get to me and haunted me forever if it looked like it bothered me. But I feel I turned the tables on DBR and what they have really done is show the world that I'm a stereotypical pale/ginger skinned Scotsman of athletic build proud of his heritage that is low maintenance/can get ready quickly for a night out, comfortable with his sexuality and is packing heat!

Suck on that Sutty – and thanks!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BRYAN MACKENZIE" followed by the number "121". The signature is fluid and personal.



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STEVE HOLCOMBE



ANOTHER GP AND ANOTHER OVERALL EVENT WIN! THE 2016 ENDURO WORLD CHAMPS MIGHT ALMOST BE OVER BUT SUPER STEVE'S NOT DONE WITH WINNING JUST YET . . .

Seven done and one to go! It's crazy to think that there's only one more round of this year's Enduro World Championship to go but that's exactly what's left. After a crazy few weeks we've now finished 14 days of racing and have just two to go in France early in September.

In recent weeks I've enjoyed some amazing highs and some not so enjoyable lows and spent way too many hours hanging around airports. But importantly I'm heading into the final round of the series leading my class. And with just two days to go I've managed to clock up more overall day wins than any other rider which I'm pretty proud of. All-in-all I'm pretty chuffed with the way things are going right now.

As I write this I've just finished the GP of Italy, my team's home race and a race that on the whole went really well for me. Although most Italian enduros are held in the north of Italy – where a good number of the teams and Italian companies are based – this year's Italian round of the series was a little further south. A southern(ish) Italian event in mid July should have only meant one thing – hot weather and sun baked trails and two days of tough racing. As it turned out we got the two days of tough racing, but only one day of hot weather.

It chucked it down the day before the race, almost washed away everything in the paddock and made for some seriously slippery conditions come Saturday morning. Thankfully, the rain did stop and eventually the sun came out. But it made for an interesting start to the first day. I have to hold my hand up and say I kind of messed up a little on the event's enduro test but managed to end the day with

an Enduro 3 class win which was the most important thing.

I wasn't expecting to do quite as well as I did on day two but I pushed hard, changed the way I normally ride a little and got the overall win. Not a bad way to end the team's home GP. The boss of Beta came along to watch so I'm hoping I earned myself a few brownie points! Like I said, the last few weeks have been all about racing. That and a quick trip to Italy for the 2017 Beta enduro launch. I feel a little like I've done little else other than fly, drive, walk tests and race for as long as I can remember and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't in need of a little chill out time right now.

Thankfully, there's a bit of a break in the international racing calendar now but I have two British Enduro Championship events coming up soon to keep me busy. I'm looking forward to racing at home as at world championship races I pretty much spend all of my time with my Italian team. Not that that's a bad thing – it'll just be nice to be around folk I don't get to see too much of nowadays like I did at the Welsh Two day Enduro.

The Welsh was the enduro equivalent of stepping off a crazy, seemingly unstoppable motorsport conveyer belt and being able to knock things back a level or two. Still a hugely important race for me, the slower pace of the event, the fact my days before the event weren't only filled with test walking meant I actually got a little time to kind of relax. Even the racing was more chilled out. I spent most of the event blasting around Welsh forests with friends which was a lot of fun.

At the GP of Italy the FIM announced the

calendar for the 2017 series which received a few raised eyebrows. What's been proposed is a true winter enduro in Finland to start, one overseas event in Mexico and a final round in Germany. Also, an event in the UK.

If all goes to plan the British event will be at Hawkstone Park on September 23/24 with a sprint enduro on Saturday and a cross-country race on the Sunday. I've not done much in the way of cross-country racing for a while but I guess I'll have to get practising before next September.

The season opener in Finland didn't exactly meet with much positivity. No one knows too much about the race yet but there could be as much as one metre of snow on the ground in places, some of the racing will take place in the dark and it could be as cold as minus 20 degrees. It's gonna be an interesting one.

Before I go I just want to say a quick well done to Jack Edmondson for winning the 125cc Enduro Youth World Championship in Italy. He's come through a tough season with flying colours. It's great to see a British rider on top of his game and a collecting a well-deserved world title.

Enjoy the summer everyone!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'HOLCOMBE' followed by the number '#70'. The signature is fluid and appears to be done in a cursive style.

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DANIEL GROVE



A RARE INSIGHT TO THE LIFE OF A FACTORY SPECTATOR . . .

The chances of finding myself and my fellow DBR columnists all in the same place at the same time are pretty damn slim – we get close to having a full-house on occasion although normally we're two or more down. You're no doubt well aware of what my peers get up to as their results are always online and you don't have to scroll down too far to catch their names. This is quite the opposite of me as I'm having a year off from racing...

Most months you get a glimpse of their lives away from the track which I enjoy as I expect you do too. You've probably noticed that I've never written about my own little life – just about subjects that I feel need to be aired.

There's absolutely no reason for me to give you a monthly update on my life as I work like most of you and despite loving my job, most of it won't mean anything to you guys...

When I'm not in work I ride the long-terminer RM-Z although I've had a few weeks off recently after picking up a small back injury. I'm also getting back in the mountain bike game and getting back into running as I couldn't do either of these for a while for the same reason that I couldn't ride the RM-Z.

I'm killing it in the UK BBQ scene right now, inviting all kinds of marinated meat, fish, spuds and vegetarian options on board Smokey Joe for a good grilling. Smokey Joe doesn't belong to me though, my girlfriend bought him recently but I'm happy doing the flipping while at the BBQ reigns as that's just what men do, innit?

I should probably add that I see my girlfriend when I'm not at work too but as she works at the same place as me I get to see her all the time anyway...

What I'm trying to get at is over the last month or so I've actually done some cool stuff and got out of the office a fair bit which is a big deal for the fifth fastest member of this magazine's columnist team. So with that in mind I thought I'd share some of it with you as some of it is motocross related...

First up, the British MXGP! The plan was to go on the Sunday only with my girlfriend which I was happy to do however John from O'Neal offered me a spare weekend pass out of the blue as he had a stand in the trade area and traders get X amount for staff or guests.

You're probably thinking that was a stroke of luck but keep reading. I tell Sutty this and he says if I go Friday I can take part in a Scott mountain bike ride that's taking place and also attend the 2017 Yamaha YZ-F model launch where old Reedy and Febvre will be attending.

Not only this but the digital dude from DBR HQ could no longer make the trip to the GP unfortunately and he had a hotel room booked for the weekend. Also included was a media

pass so needless to say I took this option and after a frantic half hour of sorting things out – including some new Royal Racing/7iDP mountain bike gear courtesy of Decade Europe – I'd gone from happily thinking that I'd be paying to get in to watch to then be there for two and a half days with a hotel room thrown in n'all! I certainly struck lucky with this and if my boss at work hadn't kindly obliged with letting me have the Friday afternoon off work I'd have just been there on the Sunday.

I'll spare the details of the rest of the weekend as the GP was a little while ago now and no, I didn't speak to Reed or Febvre as I was too busy tucking into the fine Italian buffet that was laid on at the bike launch when it was my turn. I'm not joking! I was sat behind them though while the bikes were introduced...

The Tuesday after the GP I was on a train to London for my first 'work trip' for my real life job and attended the MagentoLive conference. I work in Digital Marketing for my real life job so this was a bit of a networking/eat posh lunch/get inspired by talkers type of trip. It was my first time visiting London on 'business' so it was pretty cool going there for a day, especially on someone else's dime given the price of a return train ticket during peak hours!

A week or so later my buddy Dooey turned 30 and we had a bit of a ride day to celebrate at the local practice track. The track is pretty wore out and down to rock in a lot of spots so I burned through a one-ride-old tyre and Dooey's bike ended up with a hole in his engine case so it was a mega day out.

After a post ride shandy on the way home there was a big ol' party at his parents' house to celebrate his birthday and he also went and asked his girlfriend Lacey to marry him. She said yes so it wasn't a totally lost day as he wasn't looking forward to the big 3-0 – or the thought of another repair bill on his Honda!

The Wednesday after that I was on another train to London! For work again although this time it was for a meeting and then to attend an email marketing awards ceremony where the company I work for only went and won our category for the best email subject line!

Sadly, we couldn't stay over and take advantage of the free bar as we were stacked out with work but fortunately our award was the first award handed out so my colleague Marcus and I went up on stage, collected the award, walked off stage and then pretty much headed straight for the tube as we had a 21:15 train to catch. We got to Paddington at 21:10 only to find that all trains out of there were delayed and three were cancelled so when the one train did become available it was carnage trying to get on the thing! Fortunately we did otherwise we'd

have been in a right spot of bother...

I'd finally got the suspension dialled in on the little RM-Z prior to Dooey's ride day – thanks Geoff – and had my back seen to and sorted by a physio so I was really keen to ride the following weekend. However that got shelved the moment a fresh Stanley knife blade glided into my left thumb while I was getting creative with the side panels in the search of getting more air into the motor (the top teams are all doing it).

I've not been so annoyed with myself in quite some time and the next morning when I was meant to be riding I went to the local hospital to get it looked at properly. It had partially stuck itself back together overnight thanks to a plaster that I'd put on however the nurse wanted to look inside so she split the wound open again! That hurt like a Mother Hubbard but a few steri strips and a couple of princess plasters later, I was heading home in a big old sulk...

Later that day though it was my friend Beth's 30th birthday party. There was one of those small real ale kegs with Hobgoblin in and as no one else drinks proper beer I put away at least three pints of it as well as a big spread of food so the day wasn't completely wasted. I'd also made a start on carpeting out my van to kill some time during the day as I'm unable to not do anything on the weekend...

The next day I was off to another round of the AMCA championship with my mate Mitch who I don't see much nowadays. On the way up we pretty much sorted out the country, the economy, motocross, even the world so we just need to put our ideas in place and sort these things out for everyone's benefit.

We aimed to get there with a bit of time to spare before the first race however some young lad by the name of Frazer Martin – get well soon chap – did himself a right mischief in the first MX1 race and delayed the day by a couple of hours so it was only two motos each for each class. With a bit of downtime we caught up with some of the dudes that we knew racing and I gave a bandaged thumbs up to a few others.

By the time you've read this – and at the end of a whirlwind of a month – I'll have also attended the launch of the 2017 Fox Racing gear and started racing the long termer RMZ more as I'm sick of practice tracks now. I'll be ripping through some tears offs from here on out and I'll also put the blunt blade back in the Stanley knife for my own safety.

Normal service should resume with the contents of this page being about something topical and not about my work, trains, food or beer. Cheers...

Daniel Grove



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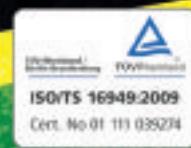
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TAPED NIPPLES



IT'S A BIT OF A SAUSAGEFEST THIS MONTH AS JAKE SPOTS A NATURIST IN A NEARBY FOREST WHILE OUT LOOKING FOR RON — HIS MISSING SAUSAGE DOG . . .

He! Hello! It's another extremely late column for myself even though I had plenty of warning too. But with the local race this past weekend plus Ben Townley staying over until yesterday I've been fairly distracted.

On Monday the weather was really nice and we were sat by my parents' pool rather than at home inside on the sofa... Turned out we were in for a wild goose chase all afternoon and night though.

We took our three dogs with us to my parents and they were playing with their dogs in the garden and generally being normal. Then I noticed our two Jack Russells had beggared off which is also quite normal as they can squeeze through mum's garden fence.

When we used to live there they would always do it, most of the time coming back about four hours later ready for dinner, covered in sand where they'd been down rabbit holes. After an hour I thought I'd better go look for them and at a glance I could see them in the distance going from hole to hole on the hillside but there was no sign of our sausage dog, Ron.

He's only about six months old and is a total midget and a bit of a handbag dog thanks to the missus. It's only his second time around my parents' house so he doesn't know his way around there at all. Long story short, by 9pm we had about 25 of our good friends walking around the farm and surrounding property looking like total sad acts playing that putrid Pokémon game shouting 'Ron'...

Some of us came across a man walking around the forest next door completely naked. I got a video of him as I couldn't believe my eyes. He was fully naked – no shoes, just some glasses, running around the pine forest. So weird!

We all gave up at about 10:30pm and since Blu, BT and I had been searching since 4pm we drove back to our house, got some clothes and a shower then went back out for another search in the silence of the night. Our fears were that he was stuck down a rabbit hole or in the mud

somewhere by the river.

We walked around until 1:45am and we heard him a few times barking and went round in circles for a while trying to find him. The Jack Russells started howling and singing in the house and it must have attracted him as we found him up by the veggie patch in mum's garden. Bloody thing. Anyone that's had this sort of thing happen will know it's a crap feeling. So that was a strange sort of recovery day – probably about 15km walked in sandals!

Let's talk about proper stuff anyway. After the British GP we had Mantova which is a schoolboy track situated in a city in northern Italy. It was pants and stupidly hot, hitting 40 degrees for most of the weekend and nearly 100 per cent humidity.

The track is normally quite sandy and has a fair bit of give but it was hard edged and just didn't flow at all this year. I had bad starts all weekend as they ripped the start straight so deep and I got blown away each time. I managed a 13th in the first one but the second one I was right at the back after avoiding a crash and only managed 17th, after about 20 minutes it was full survival mode.

I was happy it was over to be honest as I didn't enjoy it. Steve Fry and Warren the truck driver did me a massive favour by buying a paddling pool and I laid in that directly after each moto to try and cool down.

Blu and I had something to look forward to though as my parents had come over for the GP and were going to treat us to a two night stay with them at a hotel on the edge of Lake Como. We had a lovely couple of days and I felt so recharged after the two days of nothing apart from sun, food and G&T.

Had a good day practising to finish the week off then flew up to Scotland for the British round at Leuchars. I had a mega day up there, loved the track and had good starts. First race I led from start to finish which felt amazing as I held off all the attacks from Tommy and dealt with it. Second race I was third behind Tommy and Shaun again and it was going to go all the way

to the flag after Tommy had a spill.

But then I had a small clutch issue where by it wouldn't engage and I went straight over a berm and dumped it. I still finished out third which gave me second overall. I was chuffed and it felt so much better than my win at Desertmartin where I got a bit of a gift.

A couple of days later we had the annual Eastern Centre evening meeting at the old-school track of Wattisfield Hall near Diss. EBB, Lewis Tombs and I had all agreed with each other that we were going to do it otherwise there's not much point in only one of us doing it and going for glory. It was one hell of an event though and Elliott and I had some great races. There was a mega crowd too which was cool.

In the lead up to Blaxhall I had some good days riding locally and was feeling good. It was so nice to be racing 10 minutes away from my house. On Tuesday I went there and spent a couple hours on the digger making a bit of a wall jump to slow a section down but the good old ACU made them take it out as they were worried the MXY2 boys wouldn't get up it!

But the event went well, the whole track crew did a great job and it got lovely and rough. I had a decent day, in the first race I rode bit tense but was keeping Tommy honest until they waved yellows for the downed rider by the finish which meant I couldn't jump that jump and had to cruise past the incident.

It was frustrating as I could see he was still jumping it and I was sure he would be disqualified but because about 25 other riders were unable to recognise three separate waved yellows and a red cross flag it meant that no one got penalised... A rules a rule, sorry!

I had an awesome fan come up to me at the weekend and hand me a cigar after reading my last column... Thanks mate, I won't let ya down!

GO HARD #45

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KTM



*Tommy Searle takes control
of the Maxxis MX1 title chase*



NEWSHOUND

A QUICK TRIP AROUND THE OFF-ROAD UNIVERSE WITH B-MAC AND FUTURE7MEDIA'S ROBERT LYNN

The Bullet has been sidelined once again. Jeffrey Herlings has again been dominant this season but like the two years behind him an injury has again put his bid for a third world title in jeopardy. With a 169-point lead in the championship it's far from lost at this moment but he's been down this hole before and seen it slip away.

Not always the case but certainly in some, Herlings injured himself away from Grand Prix competition – this time at a Dutch championship round. Herlings notoriously rides more than most of his competitors for his fitness regime but perhaps in the essence of health and safety he should consider toning that back a little now. Riding the bike as often as he does – and at his pace – brings greater risk and opportunity for injury which has now caught him out quite a few times. I hope he recovers quickly.

Travis Pastrana and the Nitro Circus launched the inaugural Nitro Circus World Games this summer where they held an event similar to X Games but entirely based around going huge on ramps. It was much a case of the most insane stuff wins. The FMX Best trick was won by a guy doing a double front flip!

It's unbelievable that a guy with a front flip Hart Attack never won and a guy who done a double backflip with an attempted Nac Nac in the middle never even made the podium! The level of freestyle motocross has elevated so much that it just got to blow your mind...

The EMX300 series has been given the old heave-hoe from the MXGP schedule as of 2017. The busy GP timetable needed to be trimmed back and after some deliberation the FIM concluded that the 300cc two-stroke class brought the least to the table and therefore given the bullet. Two-stroke fans the world over are weeping.

Simmo had a howler at Blaxhall. Fighting back to form from his ongoing hand injury that has plagued him lately, a day completely unrelated to the hand befell him at round six of the championship which saw uncharacteristic crashes completely turn his championship on its head. Shaun lost an 18-point lead and now trails Searle by 14. His bike will look strange without red plates at Preston Docks.

Talking about Tommy he's starting to catch fire late in the season. Arguably the fastest guy in the UK statistically at the moment – Jake and Simmo will definitely argue that as they have

each taken scalps this year – of late he has run into very few problems mechanically or rider related and if he could transfer that into MXGP he could be a real threat to the top five in the latter part of the season.

Jake the Snake has had resurgence to his previous MX2 form from a few seasons back which ranked him fourth in the world, too. Nicholls has won two motos, one overall and been on the podium for four in a row this summer in MXGP and is looking to consistently crack the top-10 in MXGP for the remainder of the year.

Adam Sterry hadn't won an overall in the MXGP championship yet in his career until June this season and since round four at Desertmartin has won three in a row (damn those pesky kids).

Mel Pocock has split from the Dixon Kawi team and joined up with Hitachi REVO Husqvarna for the remainder of the season. Hitachi's two MX2 riders, Ben Watson and James Dunn, are both sidelined with injury and although I don't know the politics of it all Pocock has rejoined with the team that he fought for the MX2 Maxxis title with previously. On his debut for the team he even scored a



*Jeffrey Herlings
missed Loket with
a broken collarbone*



GASTRONOMICAL!

GOODWOOD ACTION SPORTS (GAS) DEFIED THE ELEMENTS TO THE DELIGHT OF THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF GOODWOOD FESTIVAL OF SPEED ENTHUSIASTS WHO FLOCKED TO THE WEST SUSSEX VENUE FOR FOUR DAYS OF RAPID ACTION AND ENTERTAINMENT . . .

Despite a deluge of rain on the opening day and again on Saturday, the e22 Sports team managed to maintain the jumps, ramps and raised wooden sections to a high standard and enable the best-ever GAS line-up which included multi world champions and a host of X-Games medallists to take to the arena.

The FMX boys welcomed legendary American motocross and supercross ace Ricky Carmichael into their squad. Although now retired from racing his appearance proved a huge boost for both GAS competitors and spectators alike. Also in the heady mix of FMX riders were the Arenacross UK Tour superstars of Petr Pilat and the British Lings Bolddog team of Dan Whithy, Arran Powley and Samson Eaton. Germany's Luc Ackerman and Australians Steve Sommerfield and Ryan Brown completed the incredible entry of top-level talent.

The final day saw the FMX, BMX and MTB riders take part in Best Trick competitions. Ackerman went the extra mile with his incredible backflip to win FMX Best Trick with Sommerfield second and Pilat third. The appreciative crowd was left in little doubt that it had witnessed exceptional FMX at its very best.

"For the five years that we've been producing GAS for Goodwood, I can honestly say that welcoming Ricky Carmichael to the UK and having him take part with us was without doubt one of the biggest highs that we've ever experienced," says e22 Sports boss Matt Bates. "His professionalism and ability to spend so much time with fans was a masterclass to any Pro level rider and I would personally like to thank Goodwood, Visit Florida and RC's crew for making this all happen."

The GAS Arena closed on a high with a multi-discipline free-for-all after four exhilarating days of serious action motorsports and plans are already well underway for next year's Goodwood extravaganza. If you've never visited before, make 2017 the year you do!

podium in the second moto for the first time since his horrific hand injury last year.

Talking of James Dunn, he has had a really tough time of it lately. After such a huge start to the season for him where he lay top three in the points chase he picked up a concussion at Hawkstone Park some months ago and is suffering from 'delayed repetitive concussion syndrome'. He has tried to race a few times since the May incident but has been a shadow of his former self so had decided to step back from racing for the short term to gather himself.

The ACU are taking head injuries serious this season. Lewis Trickett is another one to fall foul of a head injury and picked up a concussion in a mid-week practice crash. The ACU, hearing of the incident, stopped him competing for two weeks which is why he was absent at Desertmartin. The ACU enforce a nine day ban minimum for competitors over 20 years old, 12 days for 16-19 year olds and 23 days for anyone under 15 years of age after a concussion. A 'fit to ride' letter must come from your GP after this lay low period to have your ban removed so you can get back to competition.

Can you believe that Kristian Whatley has only made it on the podium one time this

season at the Maxxis British Championship. Three years ago Whatley was the most dominant guy on the British motocross scene winning every title in the UK, which makes it astonishing that it has taken him this long in 2016 to stand on any step of the podium. He put it down to a new found confidence with the suspension on the bike discovered prior to round six.

Two-stroke hero, Matt Moffatt, never made it into the second race of Blaxhall Pits after he was taken out on the sighting lap incurring heavy damage to the exhaust of his KTM 300. There are two approaches to a sighting lap – 1) slow and steady to look at the track and take in line options or 2) fast and hard to raise the heart rate and use it as a last minute warm up to get race ready for the impending gate drop. The collision between Moff and Irishman Stuey Edmonds was the result of when those two strategies collide and unfortunately for Moffy he was the loser of the exchange.

Those at Blaxhall Pits might have noticed Ben Townley hobbling around. Townley came back from retirement to race world championship motocross this year after an impressive ride out at the MXoN last season. But the Kiwi openly admits that he just didn't make it to the level



WALKER BACK ON INJURY BENCH CONTINUED LEG WOES FOR WALKER

Jonny Walker's 2016 continues to stall with further injury putting him back on the injury bench. Making his eagerly awaited return to competitive action at the Red Bull Romaniacs, Walker was ruled out midway through off-road day one.

Hitting a tree stump hidden in long grass resulted in a nasty crash and he injured his previously broken leg. Limping on to the service point, and with the pain levels increasing, he had no option but to park his bike before the race really got going. Speedy recovery JW22.

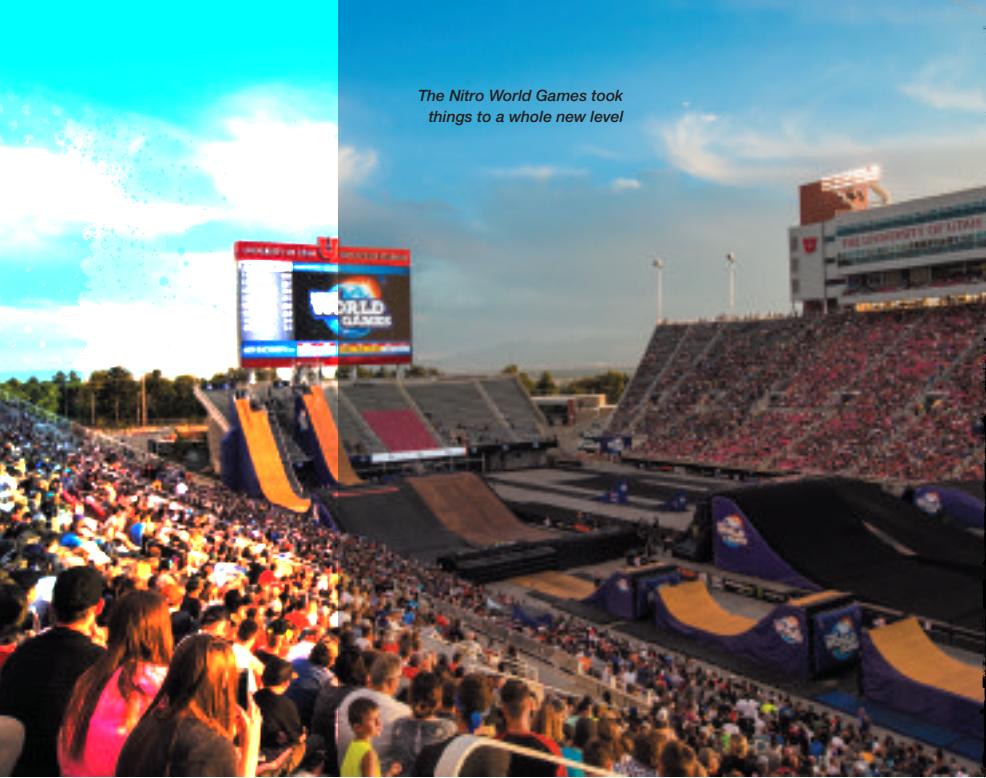
of competitiveness that he had hoped in his return and this latest serious injury – diagnosed as 'internal injuries' – has ultimately stamped his retirement for real this time. I don't think we will see BT back behind a professional start gate again.

Another high profile PED scandal case in MX may have emerged. Super-fast Factory Kawasaki Oz twins Matt and Jake Moss were pulled from round seven of the Australian motocross championships after they allegedly failed an anti-doping test by the Australian Sports Anti-doping Authority. Samples were taken at round four and it is believed that they have tested positive for banned substances.

If guilty, the Moss Bros getting done for taking PEDs won't be overly big news to our shores but I can assure you on the Oz scene they are on the same level as James Stewart and it would shake it up quite drastically – Matt Moss is a multi time National Champion and a former team-mate of Ryan Villopoto when he filled in at Monster Energy Kawasaki for a while in the US. It will be interesting to see if their punishment is consistent with that of JS7's.

Stewart is rumoured to be in jeopardy of losing the number seven which he has made so famous. By AMA ruling a rider must earn a

The Nitro World Games took things to a whole new level



Steve Holcombe is just one round away from being crowned world champion



Unless JS7 pulls his finger out this season we might not be calling him JS7 no more...

certain amount of points each year if they wish to retain their 'career number' and such the way has JS7's season been he is falling remarkably short of that point threshold. Through injury and now paternity leave Stewart hasn't finished many motos this season but will need to take the chequers a few times before the end of the season to retain the number which he has branded himself with.

Kenny Roczen has been in a league of his own this summer in the great outdoors but was halted by Tomac when the series returned to Southwick. Everyone thought that perhaps this was the end of Roczen's dominance since Tomac stepped up – nope. Roczen went back to his dominating ways the very next week. He has also expressed his desire to race the MXoN for Germany this year but says team logistics ultimately has the final ruling – rumour has it he may be switching to red in the off-season.

Defending 250 champion Jeremy Martin only picked up his first overall of the season when the tour went to his very own track, Millville. Team-mate Cooper Webb has been stomping the class so far and even took the first moto from J-Mart in his own back garden but the local boy lifted the overall courtesy of a second moto win.

Expat and factory KTM rider Dean Wilson finally made it back behind the gate since his latest injury which he picked up months and months ago. Wilson hovered around the top 10 which isn't too bad since his long lay-off but will be looking to impress for the remainder of the season to secure a factory position on a team for next season.

There is a lot of cause for celebration this month. Britain has got itself a new world champion in enduro and two winners at the Red Bull Romaniacs. All in all, it's been another bloody good month even if we do say so ourselves!

Top of the pile, Jack Edmondson is the newly crowned 125 Youth Cup World Champion. The latest Edmondson world champ, Jack, son of Paul, clinched the title at the penultimate round of the EnduroGP series in Italy. The rider to beat this year, Jack won eight days straight, plus a win at the series opener in Morocco to wrap things up early. Huge congrats Jack, you deserved it.

With just the final round of the series left in France next September, Steve Holcombe is now just 15 points behind Matt Phillips for overall honours thanks to another outright win in Italy. Regardless of how the overall standings

pan out he's got a virtual grasp on the E3 crown with a 17-point lead over Johnny Aubert.

Hanging onto a top five in EnduroGP, Nathan Watson, this year's best enduro rookie is also second overall in E1. And with Danny McCanney third things are looking good.

AMA EnduroCross gets ready to roar back into life with the opener of the eight-round championship in August. Looking a stacked class, Taddy Blazusiak returns to the mix alongside Colton Haaker and Cody Webb.

Graham Jarvis shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. Age is just a number for the 41-year-old as he blasted his way to victory at the Red Bull Romaniacs. Another incredible display of riding from the Brit, Jarvis has now racked up a record smashing fifth win in the Romanian Hard Enduro Rallye.

Getting faster and faster as conditions got tougher and tougher, Jarvis is simply The Man at blind racing, reading unseen enduro terrain better than anyone around.

But Grimbo wasn't the only Brit to top the podium at Romaniacs with Andy Noakley winning the Silver class. A huge congrats is also in order for Noakley as he won all four off-road days to get the job done.



WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

BRAD ANDO'S RACE JERSEY AND SOME SMUGGLING DUDS UNDERWEAR UP FOR GRABS...

Verde Sports Racing's Brad Anderson is having a pretty stellar 2016 so far and as things stand he currently sits sixth in the Maxxis, third in the MX Nationals and third in EMX300 too where he moonlights for the GL12 Yamaha squad. To celebrate this all-round awesomeness we've hooked up with the good dudes at Smuggling Duds to offer one lucky reader the shirt off Brad's back and some brand-new boxers from the SD range of course.

To be in with a chance of winning this awesome prize simply answer this simple question. What brand of bike does the Verde Sports Racing team run in the Maxxis?

- A) KTM**
- B) Husqvarna**
- C) Honda**
- D) Banarama**

If you think you know the answer then scribble it down on a piece of paper along with your name and address then send it to us at – Ando Comp, DBR Towers, 41 Northgate, White Lund Industrial Estate, Morecambe, LA3 3PA before the closing date of August 25. After that we'll stick all the correct entries into a box and randomly pick ourselves a winner.





Sten Lundin (Matchless Metisse) wins the first moto of Imola's last ever Italian 500GP in 1965 © Justyn Norék



Racing his 1961 world title winning Lito (3) at Namur in 1989



The great man modestly acknowledges his rapturous reception at the 1989 Namur Vets' reunion



Lundin's 1961 world title winning Lito

Sten Lundin

1931 – 2016

World motocross lost one of its original greats when Sten Lundin passed away in early June, aged 84. After the FIM inaugurated a 500cc world championship in 1957 the tall Swede never finished outside the top three for the first eight seasons and twice emerged triumphant.

Third in the 1955 European championship and winner of the Motocross des Nations aboard a BSA, Lundin moved on to Monark, the first Swedish manufacturer to build a motocross bike. It used an Albin engine (originally built for the Swedish army in 1942) breathed on by master engine builder Nils-Olov Hedlund and Lundin developed it into a world beater.

"It took two years to get the Monark right," said Sten. "If anything broke we fixed it!" That included front forks that snapped at Gallarate, in Italy and were replaced by Arturo Ceriano – the first Ceriano motocross forks ever made. The 498cc single cylinder four-stroke weighed in at just 282lbs and only five were ever built. Victorious at Namur and Ettelbruck in 1957, Lundin and the Monark also triumphed at Imola, in Italy and in the first ever Swedish GP at Uddevalla in 1958. Then in 1959, winning in Austria, Luxembourg, Italy and Germany, Lundin stole the world title from arch-rival Bill Nilsson.

1960 and Lundin lost out to the pugnacious Nilsson and his Husqvarna by just two points but when race team manager Lennart Varborn died the factory pulled out of racing. They gave Sten his GP bike as a parting gift and another Monark employee, Kaj Bornebusch, picked up the pieces and founded Lito (named after a lithograph printing factory he owned).

Sten offered to race his Monark with Lito logos on the tank and in February 1961 signed a contract with Lito. Though always basically his 1960 Monark, Lundin's Lito carried him to another world title triumph when he trounced Nilsson with victories at Sittendorf in Austria, Namur, Jonzac in France, Germany, Luxembourg and Payerne, Switzerland. That same Lito would see Lundin to third,

second and third places in the world during the next three years in battles with Rolf Tibblin and Brit Jeff Smith.

Sten also claimed individual overall honours in the MX des Nations at Knutstorp in 1963 before he moved on to a Matchless Metisse in 1965, winning his last GP that year in Sittendorf. In fact he won the Austrian grand prix four times in all as well as the first four German GPs ever run, five wins at Ettelbruck, in Luxembourg and a hat-trick of Italian GPs at Imola.

But while his great rivals Nilsson, Tibblin and Smith were big muscular men, Lundin was a slim, elegant rider who finessed those mighty four-strokes with seemingly effortless ease, rather like the equally flyweight Jean-Michel Bayle would do 30 years later. Dave Nicoll, a former BSA factory rider who became Youthstream's race director at grands prix in later years, reckons Lundin to be the best rider he ever saw. And 1973 250 world champ Hakan Andersson agrees. "As a young man I watched Sten race his Lito in the Swedish Grand Prix when it was held in my hometown of Uddevalla," recalls Hakan. "Sten, one of my heroes, was one of the smoothest riders ever and a national hero in Sweden."

By 1967 the two-stroke revolution had revolutionised motocross. "I actually tried one," said Lundin, "But that same the FIM ran a '750 European Cup', a series of five races and I won that with the same bike bored out to 504cc!"

Sten retired at the end of that year. He would later restore his Lito to showroom condition and regularly attended the annual reunion of MX icons at Imola, in Italy, where he won the first moto of the last GP to be held there in 1965.

Sadly, the 2016 gathering will be missing Sten Lundin, who regarded the parkland circuits at Imola and Namur, along with Hawkstone Park, as the greatest tests in motocross racing. His impressive total of 22 grand prix victories puts him level in the record books with Dave Thorpe, Rolf Tibblin and Sandro Puzar. That's pretty good company.

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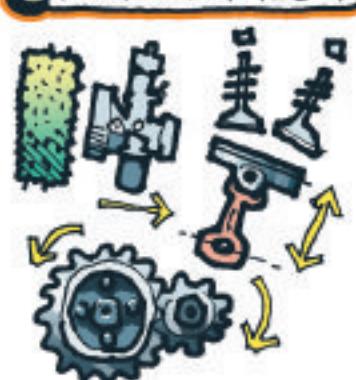
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STATEMENT!



FOR GEOFF WALKER AND HIS SR75 MOLSON RACING SUZUKI TEAM WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING - BUT, AS THE OFF-ROAD WORLD IS FINDING OUT, IF YOU GIVE 100 PER CENT ALL THE TIME THEN THE RESULTS WILL FOLLOW...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira

Geoff Walker is a man of great passion. I've known him for getting on for two decades and in all that time I don't think I've ever seen him approach anything with anything less than full-on, full-throttle, 100 per cent commitment.

When Geoff gets an idea into his head he's a force of nature – whether it's competing in extreme enduros, Elite-level downhill mountain-biking or Ironman motocross events – so when he decided to pull together his own race team there was only ever going to be one outcome.

On paper SR75 Molson Racing Suzuki is a minnow in a sea of very big fish. It's the dirt bike equivalent of a SWAT team – travelling light, hitting hard and melting back into the night while the big-money outfits are left scratching their heads and wondering WTF just happened.

The 'Suzuki' element is a 2016 development. Up until this year's Monster Arenacross series Geoff's two-man team ran a variety of machinery. Bikes were always immaculately prepped and turned out but for logistical purposes he operated a run-what-you-brung philosophy with his two riders with great success until Suzuki officially recognised his achievements.

"We've run four arenacross series now," he says, "and this is the first year we've been fully brand-associated and officially brand-associated purely because in the past when I was bringing riders in I didn't want restrictions. Whoever the guys who were coming to ride for the team were contracted with in their home countries, if they were comfortable to ride that bike then I'd make every effort to accommodate them."

Out of the four AXUK series so far, Geoff's won three team championships and for the last two seasons he's done the double with both individual and team titles going SR75's way. Considering >>

the opposition it's an achievement of Herculean proportions and the 44-year-old from Lisburn in Northern Ireland is showing no signs of shutting off.

"We had a great first year in 2013 and it was great to have two very professional UK guys in Tom Church and Carl Nunn. We missed out on the pro championship but won the first pro team championship that year – it was always going to be tough but it was a great kick-off to racing at a pro level as a unit."

The following season Nunny was joined by Frenchman Cyril Coulon and when the Englishman retired from the pro game Geoff pounced on a then 23-year-old from Valence by the name of Thomas Ramette who had cleaned up at the final AX round of 2014 in Wembley Arena.

Paired with his much more experienced compatriot, Thomas has blossomed and took back-to-back titles in 2015 and 2016 but it's not just in the UK where they've enjoyed success – they've also made their presence felt in AMA SX and MX and are currently tearing it up in Europe.

But we're getting a little ahead of ourselves so let's hit the brakes and delve into the history

of Geoff and his SR75 set-up...

Geoff's a larger-than-life character which is hardly surprising given that he's cut from the same cloth as his father Jimmy who was a major mover and shaker on the Northern Irish off-road scene and who stuck him on his first motorbike at the tender age of three.

"Jimbo used to race and my entire persona lit up the first time I sat on a dirt bike and that was kinda that. Even then there was a pattern. I'd get excited about certain one-off events at certain places at certain times and have a good crack at it and made top level with the Irish motocross stuff."

"It came to the point where we were going to have to start travelling and to be honest my family didn't have the means to transport me to the UK all the time. I enjoyed everything I did with the racing. I raced one adult British championship event at Brampton when I was 17 and took a nice holeshot in the qualifying race on a one-twenty-five Honda lent to me by Alan Morrison. I remember going up the start straight and I couldn't hear anyone else – the thing was so fast."

"I went there pretty much on my own – just chucked the bike in with some pals. I ended up

having a right good pile-up on the first lap while in the lead, had my boot ripped off and came from last to 16th and I think 15 qualified then but I earned quite good money out of the non-qualifiers race which was cool."

Geoff started working with Irish champion Brian Steele and, as is so often the case in a sport as close-knit as motocross, one thing led to another and he found himself moving to the mainland.

"I was working with Brian, then I met up with Carl and Stuart Nunn through that connection. There was an opportunity to pop over and sort of hang out with the family and do some work with Carl so I came across and that was pretty much it. I'd go back to Northern Ireland to visit but that was pretty much me."

"I came across to the mainland not with any major plan to conquer the world but just to find some work and hang out and do some stuff during the summer and it all sort of went from there. Carl was probably 11 years old and then I got some work doing some stuff with Team Green and obviously sorting Carl's bikes out and working with Stu at his Chippenham track as it was then and just having a good time and progressing."

>>

Thomas Ramette has taken two AXUK titles for the team





The SR75 squad has been dominant in the Arenacross series for the past two winters

THE CHAMPION!

Stepping up with SR75

Thomas Ramette enjoyed some success on the Euro SX circuit before joining Geoff's team and had won Main Events in French and German SX championship rounds – plus the 2014 AX finale – but the last two seasons have seen him grow in stature.

"It's really nice riding for Geoff," he says. "My career has been a step up since I started riding for him and I've got two titles in two years. He really trusts in me – sometimes he trusts in me more than I trust in myself – and that pushed me and now I feel mentally stronger than I was before and that's why I won both championships."

"This year the competition was stronger than it was in 2015. [Cedric] Soubeiras and [Fabien] Izoird have won pretty much everything in Europe for the last six years so they were my main competitors. And Josh Hanson too but he pulled over at Birmingham. It was a tough season but I was feeling stronger than 2015 and I was for sure really happy to win another title."

The 24-year-old, who was taught to ride by the father of Stephane Roncada, raced a couple of GPs in 2009 for SRS Honda and in 2013 made his AMA SX debut but failed to make any Main Events.

With his first AX title under his belt Thomas returned for two rounds in 2015, scoring a point in Santa Clara before finishing a fabulous 15th in Las Vegas which earned him a place at the prestigious Red Bull Straight Rhythm.

"We spent two months in California in 2015 and when you race there with the best riders in the world your level goes up so that's made me stronger. It was really good of Geoff to give me this opportunity to race in America and that's another reason why I was stronger in the arenacross in 2016.

"Straight Rhythm was an incredible experience – I've never had so much fun on a bike. The track was so amazing. It was less stiff than an AMA supercross track – everything was more rounded and I felt more safe. To be invited to the Red Bull event was really nice. I rode

against Dean Wilson in the first one and I lost but I was feeling good and would love to go back again this year.

"For sure being on Geoff's team has made all these cool things possible. I've been in the US but on my own and it's complicated to go on your own in the US. You have to take care of everything so it was so much better with Geoff and I just had to focus on my riding which made things much easier. Without Geoff I could not do what I have."

Thomas and Geoff were back again this year with less success. After missing out at Daytona in the Last Chance Qualifier he came within a couple of corners of making it into the final Main Event of the season.

"In Vegas I was feeling really good but we got big, big mud and I crashed with two turns to go in the LCQ while I was easily second and I wasn't able to lift up my bike, it was so heavy. That was a bummer to not make the Main Event but we spent two weeks there training for the upcoming season in France."

Racing alongside Cyrille has also been a massive help for Thomas as he draws on the experience of his team-mate.

"Cyrille has huge experience and is very strong with bike set-up so it's really good to have him on the team share his knowledge. The spirit of the team is really good – it's all fun!"

"As long as you give your all when you race for Geoff it's all good no matter what the result. If you're pushing and give 100 per cent then he's happy. I'm really grateful for what he's done for me and what he's still doing for me and I'm riding all year for Geoff and hope to make a good French championship, try to be on the podium at every race and fight against Izoird and all the top French guys."

"We haven't talked about 2017 yet but I think I'm going to stay with Geoff. I have had a lot of victories with Geoff and you don't change a winning team. It would be nice to defend my arenacross title but we haven't talked about that yet."

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No photoshoot is complete without a bit of team foolery from SR75 team boss Geoff Walker



They may not have the same resources as some of the bigger teams competing in AX but when it comes to a professionally turned out appearance Geoff and his SR75 outfit punches well above its weight thanks to lessons he learned during his formative years on the scene.

"I lived for a year in Holland with Jan de Groot's factory Kawasaki team – Carl was signed up as a 14-year-old to ride Dutch championships so he was well ahead of the game – and that was the first factory team that I worked with. From then I did some stuff with the Honda team with Dave Thorpe, then RWJ was a very good year in 1996 with Rob Herring when we won the British championship and finished 14th in the world with some podiums. It was the year Stefan Everts was full factory HRC – it was a fantastic experience with a great team."

"I've learned a lot about the hard work and respect it takes to run a team with the teams I've worked with. You learn lessons from the emotion and what it takes to put a good package together with as good a feeling as possible and I try to put that experience into my set-up and try to keep it as under control as possible."

When I first got to know Geoff well he was based near Bath while working with the MJ Church Kawasaki team and SR75 was born when he decided to strike out on his own. Just

don't ask him where the name came from and expect a straight answer...

"I gave up full-time GP mechanicing at the end of 2002 and started my own business with the bike set-up and that sort of stuff with SR75. It's pretty much something that popped into my head one evening. It doesn't stand for anything. It's just SR75."

"There's probably a loose connection with the SR71 Stealth Bomber and possibly an affinity with past factory bikes but there's something in my head that made that. I think the fact that it doesn't really mean anything is pretty cool."

The formation of SR75 pretty much coincided with DBR searching for a new Technical Editor. Having written a column for the short-lived MXUK magazine he was a natural choice and his skill with the spanners coupled with his two-wheeled talents also made him an ideal candidate for the role of enduro test rider.

"I rode to Elite level in downhill mountain biking way back in the day in the '90s – I used to crash my brains out in that a lot – but I really got back into the motorbike riding side of things when I started testing for DBR in 2003. Once I got the passion for riding back after almost 14 years off it's never sort of stopped and it's pretty much unbounded."

Over the last two years Cyril and Thomas have benefited from Geoff's out-of-the-box thinking – Cyril raced the 2014 Lucas Oil >>

FORCED LABOUR!

Nunny's back

With their long history together, Carl Nunn probably knows Geoff better than anyone else and the two-time British MX2 champion, three-time British SX champion and GP winner appears to have been press-ganged into the Irishman's future plans.

"Geoff's said I'm part of the team whether I like it or not," says Carl. "I'm not directly affiliated with anyone so I can do what I want which gives me the opportunity to come and have fun. We've got a lot of stuff to talk about. I'm not sure how far Geoff's plans go but they never end anyway."

At the moment Carl's role within the team isn't clear but Geoff's clearly relishing renewing his relationship with the 37-year-old.

"I want him to be involved with the team," said Geoff. "Carl raced his last pro race with us which was great because I worked his very first pro race with him. That was pretty cool."



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Motocross Championship opener at Glen Helen and Thomas has competed in Monster Energy Supercross as well as the 2015 Red Bull Straight Rhythm event – but his own racing activities have also followed an unconventional path.

"It's in my nature to always be looking for something a little different, from Red Bull Romaniacs to Erzberg to EnduroCross in America to world SuperEnduro – it's part of my personality to push myself into testing myself in those arenas to see what I can accomplish and that's been carried across from being a rider to being a team owner."

"I used to do well in some races when I shouldn't have just because of my attitude to getting on with it. Red Bull Romaniacs was always a great experience. The first year I did it was in 2006 with myself and Anthony Sutton

as an Expert team. Sutty fell ill on the second day so I got to ride with the Nitro Circus guys – what dirt bike riding has given me has been incredible because of the people I've met. That Nitro Circus connection meant I ended up going to movie premieres in Hollywood just from being respectful, speaking to good people."

"I did three years of the Red Bull Romaniacs. The second year – 2007 – I ended up finishing 12th in the Pros and was the first Brit to finish the Pro class which is pretty cool and I'm proud of that. The Tough One has been a favourite and my best position there has been 12th in the Pro class."

"I managed to snag an AMA Pro point in EnduroCross in, I think, maybe 2011 and ended up finishing 44th in that championship from doing one round. At the Vegas EnduroCross I cracked three vertebrae – you can find in on

YouTube if you search for Lucas Oil Wreck Wednesday [we've saved you the trouble and you can find it here – tinyurl.com/zk3fazv].

"Then there was the Glen Helen 24-hour race in the Ironman class. I don't think any Brit had done that before and I finished second which was probably the toughest 24 hours of my life. It was a tough few days to be fair because I decided on the Tuesday that I was going to do it and the race started at 10am on the Saturday morning – there was a lot to do to get from my house just outside Bath to just outside Los Angeles to race a motorcycle."

"Great times, great events! I've had a crack at Erzberg and smashed a lot of things to bits. I've even done a round of the World Enduro Championship and World SuperEnduro. My experiences on and off a bike throughout my entire life have been incredible." [>>](#)



RHYTHM METHOD! SR75 gets its wings . . .

"Only 16 people get invited so it was a great honour to be at the Red Bull Straight Rhythm last year," says Geoff. "I'd had a meeting in Las Vegas with some people associated with the event and it was put to me that if Thomas did well there then the invitation could potentially come forward and, as we know, he finished 15th."

"It's a special, special event. It was like going into a computer game from the moment you arrive. There's not one speck of dirt out of place, everybody's friendly, everybody's cool, everybody's on the right wavelength with the respect level for the riders and what they're there for."

"There's an entertainment side of it but that takes care of itself when the riders' dynamics take over. It was an incredible experience."

OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

The Suzuki connection

When Suzuki came on board for the 2016 season it helped elevate SR75 to the next level. The relationship works both ways and while Geoff recognises the support, the manufacturer recognised his achievements with a recent Suzuki 'Day of Champions' at Apex to celebrate the team's success.

"Suzuki has some great people working at HQ, they're genuinely interested in everything we do and everyone who represents the brand at all levels. Hopefully with our success and the positivity that brings as a brand they can grow and as a team we can grow."

"Cyrille has been associated with Suzuki pretty much since he was in nappies and that was perfect – my relationship was already good with the guys. We've never done anything without a good feeling."

"All our 2017 plans are being formulated. I would love our association with Suzuki to continue, I'd love our association as a unit with the riders we've got to continue and possibly add some stuff to it and go from there. I'm always interested in UK guys and their progress indoors and that sort of stuff and we'll just see what develops. We're having fun and that's the main thing. Some people try and take the fun edge out of it but they won't do that to us."

BAND OF BROTHERS

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

The SR75 Molson Racing Suzuki team has a family feel to it with Geoff, Cyrille, Thomas and – more recently – Carl Nunn forming a formidable force.

"My relationship with Cyrille is absolutely fantastic," says Geoff. "He can be a complex guy but he will do anything to help anyone and go out of his way to do things."

"As long as you respect everyone who works with you and rides with you then everyone's easy to work with. Cyrille certainly is. The guy's technical knowledge, with all his experience, is beyond belief. When it comes to setting the bike up and working with Thomas and Carl he's fantastic."

"He's technical on the track and technical off the track. He helps us as a unit with the bike set-up and he's an incredibly important part of our team."

At 34 years old Cyrille Coulon has a wealth of experience indoors and out. He scored AMA SX points four times as far back as 2010 – his best finish a 14th in San Francisco – and has raced outdoor Nationals for SR75 in 2014 and 2015.

"I've worked with a lot of guys in my time and his skills on a dirt bike are absolutely mind-blowing. I don't believe he's ever realised his potential and I wish he'd ridden as part of our team if we'd been around 10 years ago."

Hooking up with Geoff has given Cyrille a new lease of life and on top of a string of podium finishes in the AX tour he proved at the recent Pro Hexis opener that he's still got what it takes to win races.

"He was going into a retirement at the end of the French SX tour last year and we offered him a deal. He loves the bike, he loves the atmosphere – he'd had enough at the end of last year and we've brought him back to life.

"The 2016 AX tour was going to be his last racing pro and now he's working hard to have another great go at the French and European tour stuff."

Geoff feels that Thomas has huge potential...

"Thomas is just a pleasure. He's too nice in a lot of ways but that's a great thing. He's incredibly presentable, he's professional, he's willing to learn and what he can do on the track speaks for itself. The kid rides incredibly hard and incredibly fast and, just like Cyrille, with an incredible amount of respect."

"I would take him anywhere and I have done. We've gone to the highest level. Last year with the two supercross races was Thomas living a dream but for me it was a natural progression because I know how good he is. I've put him in situations where he's racing the very best guys in the world and for him to cope with it the way he has is beyond belief."

"It's incredibly difficult to explain to anyone the level of pressure a rider feels at a 450cc AMA supercross and the lad turned up, did the work in a very limited amount of time and what he did last year with a 15th in Vegas was off the charts. We've gone back this year and he's riding better, he's riding stronger but it just didn't work out."

"The kid rides flawless. The build-up to Vegas we had plenty of time and he's on factory guy pace."

Geoff's ongoing love affair with two wheels isn't just limited to petrol-power and even now he's still not adverse to hurling himself down the side of a mountain on an MTB.

"I've competed in the World Masters downhill which is a fantastic event and I've finished 18th in the world twice, in 35 to 39 years and 40 to 44 years. Last year I decided two weeks before, got a bike and went out there. It's pure, pure fun and pure passion and in 2015 in Andorra it was gnarly as it was pretty much the same track as the Elites ride so it was six minutes of hell."

"A full white-knuckle ride and I managed to break my finger in the Eurotunnel on the way to the race but zip-tying your hand onto the handlebars is all part of it."

Downhill racing was actually SR75's gateway into competition and the buzz from

running a team could well have been the catalyst for the position he currently finds himself in.

"The year before we went into arenacross we did a year with Pro Elite level downhill mountain biking as well as the extreme enduro stuff and that sort of thing. So it's always been there and always been in development and the arenacross series gave us a good target coming off some work I'd done with Tom Church the year before. He'd won the British Supercross Championship and we moved on as a progression of that."

He talks a lot about 'progression' and 'evolving' and it's this refusal to stand still – coupled with his unbridled passion, professionalism and unconventional thought process – that sets SR75 apart. It would be beyond most team owners' wildest dreams to contest a full Monster Energy Supercross

Thomas Ramette hopes to represent the SR75 squad for the foreseeable future



series but you can't help feeling that Geoff may well be the man to make it happen.

"There's lots of moving and shaking going on. Every day I work to keep things fresh and to move forward with things because the US series is incredible. I really enjoy that level and the atmosphere that surrounds it and the respect that all the guys have got for each other on and off the track. It's a pleasure to be around that and to have the team name there and representing at that level so I'll keep working to try and make that happen. We'll see – watch this space."

But for now he's got his work cut out running Cyrille and Thomas in the French-based SX Tour and all-new Pro Hexis Supercross series where they ran 1-2 at Maricourt at the start of July. And – surprise, surprise – he's loving every minute of it...

"We're just having an absolute blast."

Everything's brilliant – it couldn't be better. The team and the successes and the great people we've got around and got involved. It's brilliant, it's very positive for the sport, it's just good times.

"We've got incredible people around us, loosely-termed 'staff' who are great friends who are willing to help out. Everyone associated with what we do know I'm pretty nuts but it's all in the right way. We project ourselves as professionally as we can and enjoy everything that we do."

"Life evolves and it's great to have the connections and the passion to make things work. I could walk away tomorrow from having a race team because of the level of success we've elevated to in a very, very short period of time and if anyone doesn't respect that then they're not thinking about things correctly."



Cyrille Coulon tears it up in the Wembley shoot-out



A lot of hours go into making this motorcycle so potent



It's not unusual to see both SR75 team riders on the Arenacross podium

ROLLING WITH THE PUNCHES

The 2016 AX Tour

The 2016 Monster Energy Arenacross Tour was, at times, a bad-tempered affair with some overly-aggressive riding occasionally over-shadowing what was a first-class series.

Back in the day Geoff's passion could be a little on the, er, unchecked side but these days he demonstrates a diplomacy that would shame a UN ambassador.

"To be fair the bad feeling might have been on other people's part but there wasn't much bad feeling for us. As a unit we turn up, give it 100 per cent and that's it. Like I've said many times, if anyone's on-track and showing respect then it's sound and there's never a problem. My guys ride with the ultimate respect."

"People can see that they're not week-in, week-out riding into people – that's not our way – but if you don't show respect then you won't get respect back. I was taught by my upbringing that you show people respect and you expect it in return."

"The series was 11 rounds of racing and Thomas had nine pole positions, won five races, had whatever amount of podiums and was absolutely unsurpassed. He was fantastic. He got written off a couple of times and when it came to the finale he went out to win."

"The first title was down to the wire but it wasn't as close as this year. With the two times that Thomas was cleaned out, that put us on the back foot and looked as though the championship was scuppered but his mental strength brought him back into it. For him to pull out the results after the disappointments in Glasgow and Belfast was tremendous."

"With the strength of the competitors that were brought in we knew we were in for a good battle so to defend both Pro and Pro Team titles was pretty perfect. There was good strong racing most of the time – some was a little close to the edge – and we got it done. That's how it is – two years in a row we got it done."

"Like I say, for fear of repeating myself, we have the ultimate respect for everyone pretty much as long as they're showing respect to us."



JAKE NICHOLLS

THE WALL and the HIGHWAY

TEAM TURMOIL AND A RETURN TO FORM FROM SOME OF THE DARKEST VOIDS A PROFESSIONAL SPORTSMAN CAN ENTER - THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT JAKE NICHOLLS AND HITACHI CONSTRUCTION HUSQVARNA ARE THE STORY OF THE YEAR SO FAR. HERE'S THE INSIDE LINE...

Words by Adam Wheeler Photos by Ray Archer

Like most sports motocross is littered with tales of comeback and frequent chuckles in the face of adversity. The nature of the MX beast dictates that even the most skilled and prolific of champions will, at some point, need a grave face-to-face session with a doctor. Many make it back from a bleak diagnosis, many don't. Some get the wheels turning...but not at the same frantic rate as perhaps a career peak that might have lasted weeks, months or years.

In 2016 Jake Nicholls has reached the top of the British Championship podium and re-established some Grand Prix credentials after a period of 18 months and

three injuries that left the 26 year old at a professional and personal low – a threshold where the towel was poised to be chucked.

The fact that '45' has climbed back to recognition and defied a mangled finger, sore broken arm and painful lower back – not to mention all the anguish of losing status, a saddle, a reasonable contract and a wealth of confidence – means he is already one of the splendid narratives of British off-road motorcycle sport this year. Nicholls may come from a very supportive and well-resourced family but this personal struggle – to paraphrase the late, great American writer Norman Mailer – has been like 'sprinting up a hill of pillows'.

Rejuvenation and renaissance is not limited solely to >>



athletes. When it comes to the Nicholls saga then there is Hitachi Construction Husqvarna – British Champions the last two years and the UK's top team in MXGP. Roger Magee's outfit suffered a double blow with the loss of Shaun Simpson and backing from KTM at the end of 2015.

Ailing like a wounded beast with fractures right through the infrastructure of the squad (Magee also dealing with family bereavement), the team and Nicholls found the other just when each party needed a little something – Magee required both a prominent British name and revalidation for continuing the racing effort through the upheaval of switching brands and Nicholls came across a sympathetic figure in his former team (three years in MX2 before switching to Jacky Martens' set-up for his best years in GP in 2012 and 2013) as well as one of the few avenues that did not prioritise mining the Nicholls family funds in order for Jake to rediscover if he still had what it took.

"Jake wasn't a risk," asserts Magee. "Jake left us on very good terms and he was a lot younger then and just coming into MX2. We had seen the potential and with Jacky Martens he was able to get on the podium. We know his work ethic is very strong and we don't have to tell him what to do because he knows what he wants. He lost his way a wee bit in the last years by trying to come back too early from a couple of bad injuries. Like with some other riders we've picked up in the past – where people think they are on the scrapheap – we can still see their potential and desire. We took the chance and it has worked out."

Nicholls wasn't on his own while wading through insecurity, anaesthesia and depressingly slow initial lap-times while trying to see if the bars would still go where he wanted. "He has definitely gone through the worst I have seen and he is slowly coming back up," confides wife Blu. "He got to such a low point with the injuries that he was debating whether to quit. I always said I'd support him with everything but I did not want him to quit because I didn't feel it was his time to do that. A few people said 'maybe you should...' but I knew deep down he didn't want to. So I backed him 100 per cent so he'd carry on and as hard as it was we'd do it. Thankfully he did and is slowly getting better."

Spiral fractures, breakages and concussions are just some of Nicholls' heavy costs for a career in motocross that reached Grand Prix while he was still a teenager. "I'd grown up with injuries and just when I'd turned Pro I started a really good run and pretty much forgot about it [the rigmarole] and lost my name for being the 'injury boy', " he says.

Nicholls blossomed in MX2 and reached the top five on Magee's privateer bike when the class was far busier with competition boasting podium-and-winning experience (there are only two riders in the 2016 MX2 crop who have owned a Grand Prix). On the Martens KTM he lived on the periphery of the rostrum, tasted champagne at Matterley, finished fourth in the world and then arrived to the age of 23 and a forced move into the MXGP class for 2014.

That's when things started to fall away. Nicholls showed signs of quick adaption on Steve Turner's Forkrent KTM 450 until the fifth round of the British Championship at Whitby in July where an accident led to a badly crushed little finger on his right hand that ended his season and gave concern that he might lose the digit altogether.

"I had a good four-five years of no stress at all," he recollects. "The finger was a freak thing and I was 'down' about that because I was confident in my racing at the time and had come from a strong MX2 period. I had not set the world alight on a 450 but I was coming strong. I was gutted

but then I hadn't been injured for a while and thought 'Okay, I have to go through this'. It wasn't a bad injury but a complicated one."

With Steven Frossard as a high-profile (but ill-fated) team-mate for 2015, Nicholls regrouped and attacked his training with verve only to suffer a snapped arm at the first meeting of the year at LaCapelle Marival in France. The video of the crash still makes for unpleasant viewing.

"I made a bad decision to ride a 350 for 2015 and didn't get much confidence on that," he reflects. "I didn't look into it properly and just assumed I'd be okay when I started racing. I broke my arm in the very first race and then it went from being bad to really bad. The whole thing went on for ages and I was really down because it didn't feel like it was getting better. I felt like everything was slipping away – my form had totally gone, my confidence had gone completely as well. I was a different person because of that. Very unmotivated and there were times when aside from doing the work I had to do around the bike, training or rehab I didn't want to do anything else. We were in the middle of buying a house and I just switched off from that. It changed me."

"When I came back from the wrist I rode at the Swedish GP that summer and had a 15th which was alright and I thought 'I can chip away from here' but then at the next round in Latvia I had a crash that wasn't bad but it resulted in the back injury," he continues. "To be honest from all the injuries I've had that is the one that has really stayed with me and always will. It is a stress fracture. The way it was explained to me is that your back is like a brain and once something happens then it 'remembers'. I had slightly worsened a stress fracture I'd suffered when I was nine – it is quite impressive how they can tell that from a CT scan – and again it took ages; another two to three months before I could ride properly."

It was another spell of uncertainty and frustration for Nicholls who was on the verge of losing his ride and all the good work of the Martens MX2 years. Racing stands still for nobody. "I had pretty much given up on it all by then," he admits. "I just tried to stay fit. I came back in the British Championship at the end of 2015 and I was struggling to get in the top seven and I felt like I was trying harder than ever. I was pretty depressed about that. I was trying so hard and had given myself a month of good, hard preparation and still I was way-off some guys I had been beating by 40 seconds the previous season. I then had a massive crash in the last moto of that event – the last of the year – and it just summed up that 18 month period."

"I left there questioning everything," he adds. "I had no offers at all for the next season. It was such a difficult time I almost had to laugh at it. It was so ridiculous how bad everything had gone. I always find it hard to take when you try so hard and then nothing works out. I can take the misfortune if I wasn't putting anything 'in'. All the time I was injured I refused to go to work with my dad or put loads of effort into our house because I was still 100 per cent into what I was doing."

Caught in a situation between offering encouragement and also co-bearing the pain and disillusionment at home meant that Blu was also seeing the worst motocross has to offer. "Jake can get in a real rut where he sits and does nothing," she says. "There were people suggesting that he'd earn more doing something else but I know Jake and we'd have long conversations where I knew it was not in his heart or his character to quit. He is not a quitter at all and works so, so hard – like they [the riders] all do – and we stuck together, even if it meant starting again right at the bottom." >>



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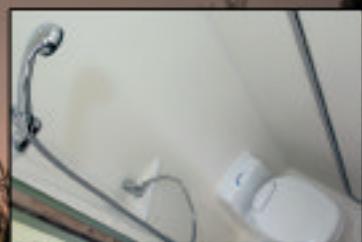
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"I knew he wasn't at the end of his career and he would have always thought 'what if?' if he had stopped. Their careers are not long and injuries have such an impact but I knew Jake had to be the one to say 'that's enough'."

Before 2016 would start to offer some light (and simultaneously show Nicholls that racing was not the utter bedrock of his existence) there was the matter of the route back and the motivation – the 'why' – to even restart his desire to motocross at the highest level once more.

Jake is propped on the edge of the sofa within the team's truck. It is touching 35 degrees outside at the Mantova circuit for the Grand Prix of Lombardia. He is in good spirits and is typically talkative and articulate. I get the feeling he hasn't verbalised too much the emotional or psychological extent of the effect of the last 18 months. It is certainly our first interview in a while.

DBR: I can remember your excitement about your first proper contract a few years ago and then you built up to that high level in MX2...so was it a bit hard to see how much the sport can leave you behind?

JN: "It was really scary to be honest and very disheartening. I'd had a good couple of years in MX2 and coming to MXGP I had to take a contract dip because I was coming into a class that was stacked. Then, all of a sudden, at the end of last year I was hearing things like 'we want 50k or you cannot come racing'.

"It was like 'wow'. I'd just signed up for a massive mortgage on my house and it was just really sad. I felt let-down because I'd

come from those positions in MX2 and then I was back to being 17th and maybe having to pay to ride. I think a fair bit of it has been down to the fact that Dad had sponsored my racing and so people immediately looked at that which is why I cut all ties with him when it comes to my racing.

"It is quite horrible because all he wants to do is help and he is such a generous person. For me to have to tell him at the start of this year 'you're not sponsoring my racing...' was one of the hardest things. He was gutted. I am one of the most appreciative people when it comes to receiving any help. I felt like such a brat and it was really strange. I had mum crying saying 'I don't understand you...'

"So it was a bizarre moment but eventually something clicked and they totally understood and it was the biggest relief ever. This was all in January this year. It was difficult for Roger to get the team going and I didn't know if it was going to happen until January. Dad wanted to get involved to help things along and I basically had to say to him 'no, if the team doesn't happen until August then leave it...I have to do this by myself'. People had always looked at him for money because he had always sponsored the sport."

DBR: It must have been an unusual time to keep harmony with people around you that wanted the best but also wondered what the next move should be...

JN: "Yes, I think one part of them really respected that I wanted to try and carry on because the injuries were pretty bad and took forever to heal but then you could almost sense that they were seeing that it >>





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his career] was slipping away as well. When I did a couple of British Championships last year and had results outside of the top five you could see them saying 'well done' but also thinking 'what's going on?'. They were really supportive and never gave me any negative vibes but I could see and feel it. It was strange. Through this winter I changed things up a bit and got the help of a sports scientist/trainer who is a semi-pro cyclist but knows MX really well."

DBR: Why?

JN: "To do something different. The last two years went so badly that I just needed to do things in another way. Keep things fresh."

DBR: You mixed things up before though, trips to New Zealand and so on...

JN: "Yeah, I'd done that in the past and actually went again this year because they seemed to lead to good seasons! It helped me get away from the slump. My pre-season training started in November and I didn't have a ride until December and then whether it would happen or not. It was demotivating and strangely motivating at the same time."

DBR: Did you have a Plan B? Did you think 'I can be a Grand Prix winning Enduro rider'? Or did you think about dipping into Arenacross? Or even something far-out like Rally?

JN: "The only thing that crossed my mind was that if I didn't get into a Grand Prix team this year then I would have got a couple of sponsors together, bought a couple of bikes and done the British Championship as an aside to working. I would have seen where that takes me and – as bad as it sounds – made myself available for any replacement rides.

"Obviously I would not have set up the year for that but it was a contingency. I actually got offered a British Championship ride quite early on but didn't take it because I wanted to do Grands Prix. For a while it was up in the air and then that British Championship option expired and then I was like 'I don't have anything...'. You always think 'well, I can do 'this or that' as a back-up' but I didn't have anything."

DBR: People dipping into this story might be curious as to why you have pushed to come back and why also prioritise Grand Prix – after all it is a series that can bring more personal reward than financial...

JN: "It would have been easy to get a normal job and race on the weekends and I have experienced a bit of that and it is far easier than what I am doing now. But that was the easy option and I didn't want it. I have been so close to the top end of the sport and I know what it is like and I love it there. I want to be back there. I obviously have some confidence somewhere that I can do it again because I would not be doing this otherwise.

"As you say there are not loads I can get out of it [being a Grand Prix rider]. I'm in the fortunate situation where dad runs a decent business and part of me thinks I am wasting these years by not picking up some education there with him. But it is not my passion and he understands that and I'm addicted to this. I guess it is just determination; I have not thought about it too much...but I suppose I felt I can get back to where I am now and then go forward again. I know I can go forward steadily if I keep on working hard...and I must have known that deep-down."

DBR: You mentioned confidence a moment ago but how did you get that back? Was it through laps on the bike? Or dreaming of Matterley in 2013?

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JN: "I don't get confidence back until 'it' happens. I'm quite a laid back person normally and can be quite happy about the unknown. Coming into the first races I didn't know where I would be, what I could do and even 'if' I could still do it. Honestly it has only been in the last couple of months where I have realised that I can still do this. I felt good when I was riding the bike but it is hard for me because I am not amazing in practice. I don't get on a practice track and light the world up and think 'yeah, I'm good'.

"I rode with Tommy [Searle] a couple of times before the flyaways and I was going alright but for me to get confidence I have to be there, do it and see it. Deep-down I know I am a hard racer and if people are in front of me then I will try as hard as I can to get on the back of them...and knowing that, I guessed it would bring me back to the level I know I can be. I was pretty sure that when I got into the race then I would build-up. That's how I work and I always believe I'm fit enough so if I can get myself into a good position then I will hold onto it."

DBR: What about a level of satisfaction? There is the testing, the team, the results and the performances – normal racing – but then you're coming from those repeated setbacks...

JN: "Honestly there is nothing better. The one result that stands out for me as being the first 'moment' was the qualification race in Spain where I got a seventh and I was sixth for the whole race. I came across the line and couldn't help laughing. It was almost like a 'fu*k you'.

"I understand that motocross is a business and it is not a hobby at this level but I laughed because I had no support from anywhere other than close people. I was sort of 'forgotten'. So running in that position was the best feeling ever. And you forget about the sh*t times instantly. They are so far behind you that you don't even think about it until someone comes up to you and says 'fair play, you have

come back from a long way' and I'll think 'have I?'.

"Sometimes I'll think 'well, I haven't done that well...' I would rather have been closer to the top 10 at Valkenswaard but when I look at the names I am up against then it makes those words 'you've come back good' hit home a bit more.

"At Matterley Basin this year the first race was horrible – the bike didn't feel good and I didn't enjoy it. I came over the line and was like 'bah' and then during the week I had messages like 'what was it like racing Chad Reed for half the moto?' And 'you nearly got your first top 10' and then you think 'ah!'. As a racer you tend to look at other – weak – parts of what you do and I'm happy that I am like that because it's how you get better. You cannot be happy with what you have but then you can also take a minute to be happy coming back from proper crap."

Roger Magee wears the same black polo shirt – almost uniform – but the logo is now white compared to the KTM orange his race team had worn from 2008 to 2015. The past two years have also been full of trials and tribulation for the Northern Irishman. His squad has often veered between trying to help and promote young talent (Simpson, Nicholls, Watson, Dunn, Irwin, Kane) and offer a lifeline to riders who – for one reason or another – were being left behind by the manufacturers (Simpson and Nicholls again, Sword and Strijbos).

The drift away from KTM (and Simpson who'd won the Dutch Grand Prix on the works 450SX-F and deputised admirably for the factory with their Red Bull representatives on the sidelines) was also compounded by numerous technical failures in MX2 for Ben Watson in 2015. The strange truth is that while the season was arguably the most successful in the team's 12 year history it was also its most turbulent and Magee had to enter a late period of negotiations and talks to emerge in Husqvarna colours, without '24' and with a semblance of ambition for 2016.

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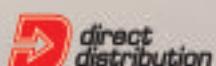
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"We'd done a really good job for KTM since 2008," he explains. "We'd brought them 10 British Championships, two fourth places in the world, a couple of Grand Prix wins and podiums and unfortunately they decided to go with another team – that is the way of the world.

"We had a look around and saw that Husqvarna was probably the best option. They wanted to grow the brand, certainly in the UK. We were a bit late coming to the table with the deal and it has been difficult in the first part of the season but now we're settled and certainly with Jake coming back on song we're going in the right direction."

The loss of the 'Simpson core' meant reorganisation and the transition seems to be working. "We try to look at the individual riders and see where we can help them and give them the right structure," Magee explains. "The same structure doesn't work for every rider and that's what we have learnt over the years. What worked with Shaun in the past worked for him again. What worked with Strijbos and Stephen Sword was also okay. Some riders like to keep themselves to themselves, others like to be integrated fully into the team and we like that family atmosphere. We've made some mistakes and we're not perfect but by-and-large we have got it fairly right. All the guys are really motivated behind Jake this year and he is reciprocating with some results now so it is a win-win situation. He has been helping take the awning up and down and likes the banter among the mechanics."

The grim irony for Magee, Nicholls and the team is that injury still pervades the scene and the badly broken foot for Watson means their MX2 programme has been non-existent and the recently turned 19 year old is coping with his own level of bitter disappointment in effectively missing an entire competitive term to recover. "I had so many setbacks in my first year and more bike failings than I could cope with," he lamented. "I had learnt a lot and I was ready for this season. I was more frustrated than anything that it ended so soon."

Watson crashed at the Grand Prix of Argentina clipping a double and also took a blow to the head. He faced the bizarre situation of having to use Google translate to talk with local doctors about the broken bones in his foot but it was a comprehensive scan on his arrival back in the UK that revealed a cracked



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navicular. The fracture required a 'bridge' implant that the youngster should have had removed by the time of going to print.

"Everybody is asking me at the moment 'when are you going to be back?'. Some people know that this happens to all riders and you can come back the next year better than ever," he says. "It is the first time I have ever been out for over three weeks and the first bone I have broken apart from my collarbone – my first serious injury. I know when I get on a bike it will all be back to normal."

"I've just had my 19th birthday so I am young in the class but it is gutting to think I would have had two full seasons before turning 20," he adds. "You cannot buy experience. It is something that happens to all riders so you have to stay positive and just get on with it."

In a parallel to Nicholls, Watson also talks about the abrupt change a rider faces when race meetings are suddenly scrapped from the agenda. "It has been strange because you disrupt the everyday routine so much; you are normally training, running, cycling or just doing something," he reveals. "There was not a thing I could do after the operation apart from sit on the sofa. I had to have my foot elevated otherwise it just started pounding. I had to have it up to get the swelling down. Mentally the main thing was realising how much you love what you do and it actually becomes hard to watch. There was a lot of time to think. Even going to watch Nathan – even if he is in Enduro – and somewhere that people are

riding is hard. It is going to make me hungrier when I come back."

With the FC250 largely dormant the team are still fairly prominent in the MXGP class thanks to Nicholls and it is clear that 'HCH' have hit a functional level of harmony. It is one that could continue for 2017. "We have a one year contract but it is working out both sides and it is my view that you don't break a winning team so we need to find the ways to improve," Magee states. "We know if someone came along with a factory cheque book and Jake was getting results to attract attention we probably wouldn't be able to match it but Hitachi like that bit of loyalty and we are trying to repay that. We get a lot of guests at each of the GPs and a lot of good feedback. It has to be a two-way street for sponsorship. With Ben we are open to all possibilities. Maybe we could run two MXGP riders and one in MX2 or have the mix that we had this year."

How Husqvarna can step up to the plate further for '17 will also play a role. "It's still the beginning of the relationship but we have learned a lot through the KTM years and have a lot of strong partners both technical and sponsorship thanks to Hitachi, Revo and all the guys that have stood by us," Magee concludes. "We are happy we bought them some success but at the moment with budget limitations we can only do what we can. No satellite team can take on a factory team because of resources but we do the best we can." >>



THE BETTER HALF!

Behind every good man is a great woman... .

Blu Nicholls has been through the best and worst with her husband for a number of years and since the pair hooked up while Jake was in the early throes of his racing career. Maintaining her own working life, saving to be a homeowner as well as sharing the rocky trajectory of a Pro motocrosser means her insight behind the scenes is acute...

DBR: For all the good times it must have been quite tough for you seeing Jake suffering in more ways than one...

BN: "Very much so. He got so 'down'...and it helped quite a bit that we'd bought our own house because it gave him something to strive for and he had to work hard because there were bills to pay. We did it all on our own and he had an incentive."

DBR: He said he wasn't much help...

BN: "Haha! Jake is not so hands-on with the house stuff but he has slowly got better. It was hard work for both of us to get him to be more positive and the positivity [in the sport] is something tricky to keep through injuries and episodes that were difficult and it can be one after the other."

DBR: It is a bit of a cliché but did the recent episode with Jake and his career bring you closer...

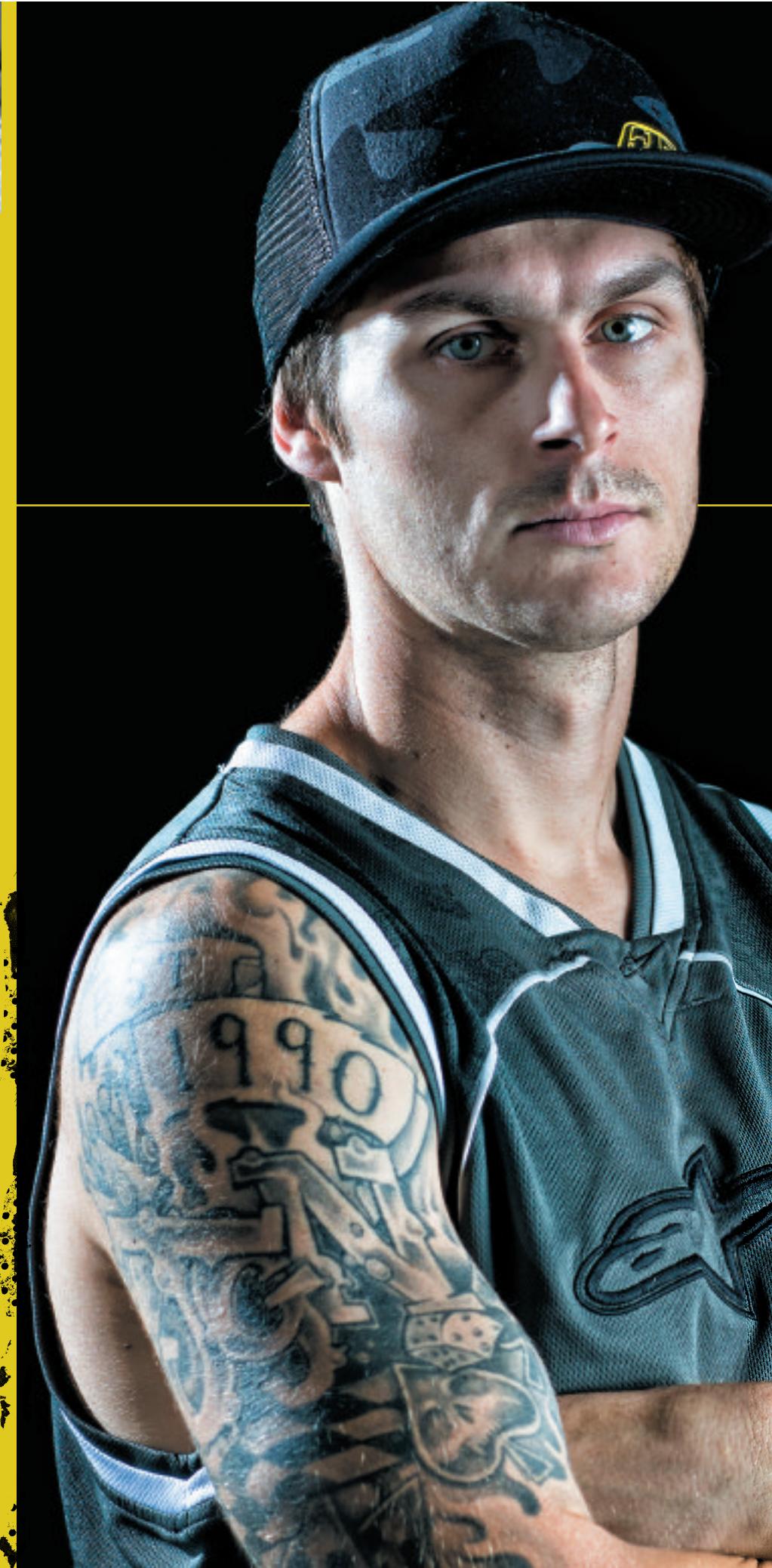
BN: "It definitely did. Jake is quite a closed person with different stuff and he got to such a point that he really had to open up and tell a few truths. I'll always tell him when he's wrong or maybe right but I'll always have his back. His family are always there but not twenty-four hours a day and through the hard moments. Jake always wants to do it by himself and he is independent. He does not want that people take him because of his family's money. Which is good and he has put his foot down... something he normally doesn't do with his parents."

DBR: Is the experience of watching him race different now because of the last two years?

BN: "It is different because we are older and have more responsibilities. Racing was always important but it is more so now because he has to earn his money to live and pay our mortgage. I guess there was some complacency before – he'd get a top five and you'd think that was normal and then starting in MXGP it was a whole different ball game and the riders are so fast. It becomes really good to see him running better and better. People are proud, and I think he is as well."

DBR: So racing stopped being the 'whole world'?

BN: "Yes...I think it is the whole world for some people and it is ours as well to some point but I work separately and we have our home and friends. Jake has seen that racing won't last forever. So it was like a reality check. The low points are not nice to have but then it can also be helpful and to also look at other things that are not just about motocross."



Back at Mantova and Nicholls duly credits his environment...

DBR: So for this season of recovery and consolidation are you pretty happy? Relieved? Re-energised?

JN: "The year was a real fresh start with a new bike, an 'old-but-new' team and I honestly just wanted to get through a few races without getting injured...and it was like that for ages. Through March, April and May it was 'just try and get through them' because I hadn't had that run of competing for a long time.

"It sounds bad but there was a time where on Sunday nights I was relieved I had got through the races...but the last couple of months I have been fighting for good results. Being at that sharp end has been good fun.

"I really like the team as well. I like that everyone feels involved and I feel that they appreciate it when I really try. I'll get a 20th in the second race in Spain after coming back from a crash and they'll be just as happy as when I've taken seventh in a qualifying race and I like that. It is what I needed this year. If I was on a team that wanted a top 10 and when I didn't get it then heads would drop then I think that would have been a bit tough for me. Everyone is appreciative of a bit of effort and then the British Championship win at Desertmartin was the team's home race. It has been a fun season so far and I like the atmosphere."

DBR: Can you dare to dream again Jake? Can you touch top eight, seven, six in MXGP – that is still a very hard class to conquer – or is it still

a bit early to say or tempt fate?

JN: "At the minute I am just sticking with the top 10. I just want to be there and that's my goal at the moment because it seemed so far away at the start of the year. Someone the other day said to me 'you can win the British Championship...' but my goal is just to get in the top three. That was all I wanted and again it seemed so far at the end of last year. I don't want to move the goalposts so far but what you say is 100 per cent in my thoughts. If I can come from the sh*t that I've had to the top 10 of the world championship then I'm sure I can push on again with the same amount of work and better material. It is definitely possible. I would say where I have come from to here is a much harder than now pushing forwards a little bit more."

DBR: The cliché is that a period of adversity is character-building but if you could go back to your 12-13 year old self and say 'this is what you'll have to go through in this sport...' does it widen your eyes a little?

JN: "100 per cent. If I went back and saw myself as a 12 year old.... although to be honest I'd had quite a bit of sh*t already by that point! I was dealing with it quite well...I still wouldn't say 'no, this isn't for me...'. I think things like the adversity makes you who you are. It has made me grow up and appreciate successful people and people who work hard – I have a wider understanding of things.

"If you are a rider who is always on top then I think it is hard to appreciate the success. When you see people who have been injured and come back – in any type of sport or a business that has gone to sh*t and>>





Jake and the Husky holeshot machine are consistently quick out of the gate

been built back up – then you can appreciate the mental side of it. Pain is pain and it a massive part of it but mentally coming back from a setback is really tougher.

"For me there was a lot of pain involved but I am proud in what I have overcome and the risks I can now take again without a thought. You do forget how many risks you have to take to be at this level and for the first few GPs I'd forgotten how hard it was on the body, just physical wear-and-tear and I'm proud to overcome that and the whole fear side of it. I wouldn't change anything."

DBR: The way you can compartmentalise the pain, a lot of frustration and ignore emotions around you from your family and then jump over those mental hurdles to aim for the top 10 again in MXGP; it seems like a long ol' way...

JN: "It was hard to overcome it all but honestly I didn't think too much into it because when I do that it tends to go wrong!"

DBR: An example?

JN: "If I sat there and thought about all that had happened in the last year and a half before the start of a moto then I'd probably have a steady start to the race! I can be a relaxed person but also quite fiery when I want to be. I had to use all those types of things and patience was a massive thing. When you are sat there in October and November and nobody believes in you and they saying 'fu*king hell –

what are you doing?' then you just have to bottle it up. It is difficult.

"There must have been something in me – just memories I think – where I thought 'I've been on a Grand Prix podium so how is it possible two years later to not even get anywhere close?'. I simplified it in my brain that I can do it again and just needed a bit of a run and once I was in the top 15 then I knew I could go forward and forward to where I am now. I would then have to re-group and try and take the next step again. I just needed a sensible run and that applied to the training as well. Training smarter also gave me confidence and helped."

With time ticking until the first moto in Italy Nicholls departs to make a final look on bike prep and check goggles in the back of the race-truck – a small corner he has inhabited this season rather than trailing a camper to all events. A week later and he starred with Simpson and Searle again at Leuchars in Scotland for the fifth round of the British series. The re-emergence vaults on for '45'. Not only is it reassuring that one of the country's premier racers is back on the map but it is also encouraging that a sport that can be cruel to the point of tragedy can also provide heart-warming and inspiring moments. Perhaps it is all part of the strong allure of going fast on a dirt bike.

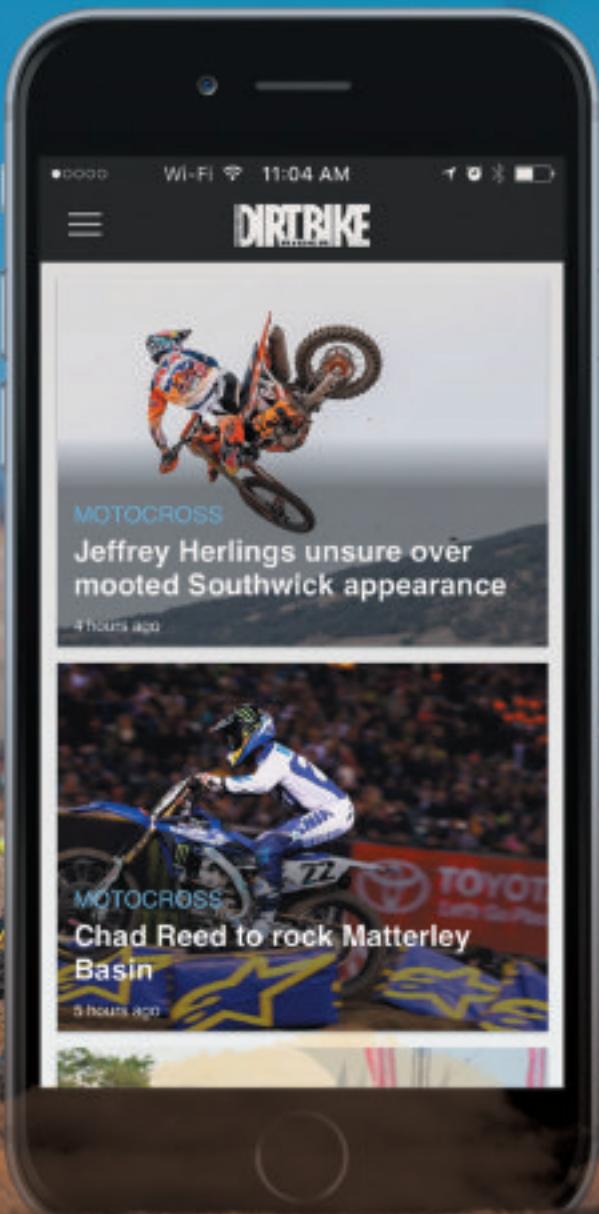




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Jane Daniels
Enduro World Championship

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HOW AN OPEN ATTITUDE AND A LUST FOR LIFE IS TAKING JANE DANIELS TO THE TOP...

Words and photos by Future7Media



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Jane sets off at the Finnish GP and absolutely dominated from this point on...



Jane Daniels is one of a number of British enduro riders to have seriously raised their game in 2016. Always a top performer in the Woman's class of the Enduro World Championship this year she hit the ground running, winning three of the opening four days of competition.

Surprising everyone, including herself, she got the upper hand on Laia Sanz fair and square. Now second to the Spaniard going into the final round Jane has everything to go for and nothing to lose in her bid to secure a possible first ever Enduro World Championship title...

DBR: First things first Jane... three wins from the first four days of competition in the Women's Enduro World Championship, where did those results come from?

JD: "I was as surprised as everyone to be

completely honest. I think it was a combination of things – I felt like I was ready for the events and rode well and Laia wasn't quite on top of her game. I'm made up with how things went in Finland and Sweden. My goal was to get closer to Laia but it went much better than I hoped. It was a real surprise to win on both days in Finland. I always hoped for a win but winning both days was amazing – a real confidence booster. Sweden was tough but the first day went well. I had a fork seal go on the second day, which made things a little tricky. But to come away from the opening two rounds of the series leading the championship was great."

DBR: Is it right that you went on a merry ol' road trip before getting to the first round of the Women's series in Finland?

JD: "I went to Erzberg first, then Sweden and Finland. My brother and boyfriend were racing at Erzberg so I figured I'd go as well. I really

enjoy Erzberg and although I only did the prologue this year it was great fun. From Austria we went to Sweden to do some training and then over to Finland. Then it was back to Sweden and back home. Three days later I headed off to Spain."

DBR: So it's fair to say it's been a busy time for you recently?

JD: "Yes, but the Women's championship is four rounds so obviously Finland and Sweden is half the championship done. I want to do as well as I can this year so I've tried to do things as well as I can and enjoyed doing it."

DBR: You explained that you wanted to 'get closer' to Laia who's been the rider to beat in recent years. How do you get on with her, she seems to very much do her own thing at the races. Does she get along with the other women like you do?"

>>

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JD: "I got on well enough with Laia. We chat but nothing much more really. She's in a very different position to most of us – it's her job and a very expensive hobby for the rest of us. She has a lot of eyes on her, she's expected to do well. It's her job, like I said, so it's different for her. She's extremely professional and a huge name in Spain. I really enjoy racing with her."

DBR: Does it frustrate you at all that Laia receives a huge amount of support, where as like most all other riders in the Women's class you do what you can with relatively little support?

JD: "You can't take anything away from her. Her results in trials, enduro, and for me especially in the Dakar, are incredible. She has some great personal sponsors which allow her to keep doing what she does full-time. Motorsport isn't viewed in the same way in the UK as it is in Spain. But that's how it is. She deserves the support she has and has to deal with the success, pressures and injuries that come with it."

DBR: That in mind, given the chance would you like to swap your situation for Laia's and become a full-time racer?

JD: "Part of me would love to be able to do more and generally spend all my time focusing on racing. But I know that's very unlikely. I really enjoy what I'm doing which is hugely rewarding in its own ways. Working to go riding at the weekend certainly gives you a different perspective on >>



An awesome trials rider with some serious MX skills – Jane Daniels is the ultimate enduro athlete





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things. And for me, knowing that I've driven to an event, worked on my bike myself, and then hopefully got a good result, that's rewarding for me. There are times that I question the sense in spending just about every penny I earn on my racing, as I'm sure a lot of people do, but I love it. It's what I want to do."

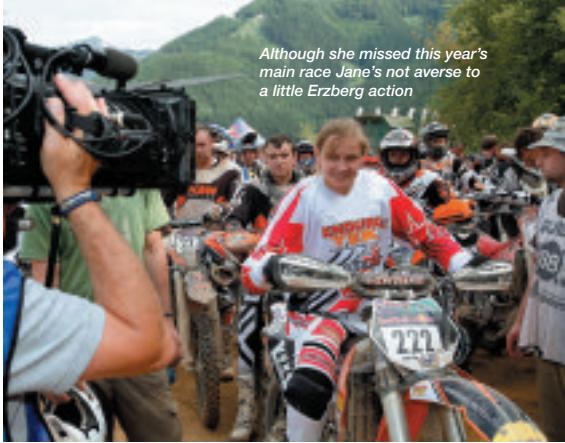
DBR: There doesn't seem to be such a bright light shining on the Women's class, not like there was a few years back. Do you think the Woman's class is less of a priority for the FIM and EWC promoters nowadays?

JD: "It doesn't help that it's seen as a lesser class. But it's not just the Woman's class – it's all classes apart from the new overall EnduroGP class. Also, the Woman's class doesn't count towards the manufacturers' trophy. I don't think having the focus on just one class is a good idea – it certainly won't help the riders of the future. Having three senior classes – E1, E2 E3 – as well as a Woman's class and then the junior and youth classes is a good system."

DBR: Cast your mind back a few years to your first ever world championship event. What do you remember most about it?

JD: "That I ended it on a drip. I think I was second on the Friday night super test, third at the end of the first day but I didn't have a clue what I was getting into. I enjoyed it, I know that much, but I didn't know what a real world championship enduro was all about – I didn't know there were tests to walk. I arrived on the Thursday, didn't get the chance to walk the enduro test and over-hydrated. I drank so much I washed all of the good stuff out of my system. I had to sit on the podium I was so ill, then spend the next god knows how long on a drip. I didn't start the second day but looking back it was certainly an eventful few days."

DBR: A possible good example of the Woman's class >>



Although she missed this year's main race Jane's not averse to a little Erzberg action



Jane's also a contender on the indoors scene



being of less importance is the fact that the Women's SuperEnduro World Championship was decided over just one race. Is that why you opted to give it a miss?

JD: "Going to Madrid for just half an hour of racing and a one-event championship wasn't that appealing to me. It was the same weekend as the first round of the European Enduro Championship, so 30 minutes of racing or two good days of riding? It was a pretty easy decision for me really."

DBR: So as well as the Women's World Championship you're also racing the European Enduro championship?

JD: "Yes, and it's gone great so far. It's a lot of work, a lot of time away, but the events,

the atmosphere in the paddock, it's all really enjoyable. There's no separation in the paddock, no factory team here, rest of the riders there. It's everyone together and that makes it a much more relaxed atmosphere. It's also great practice for the world championship races. Things have been going well. There's been two rounds so far and I've won all four days. There are about 12 women competing, too"

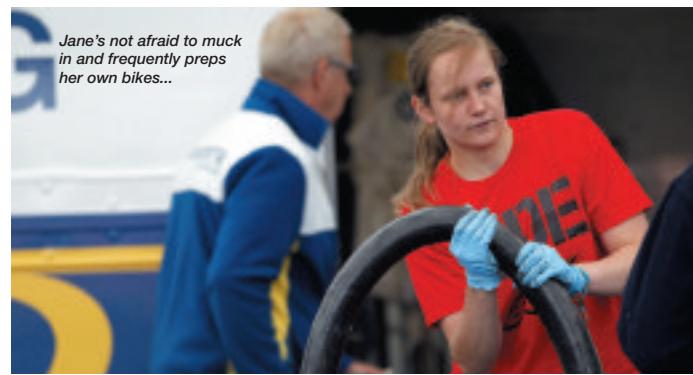
DBR: You were a full factory backed rider a few years ago. Do you miss being a part of a bigger, official team?

JD: "Yes and no. In some ways it's much easier to fly to the races and know that everything you'll need is there and has been sorted out by

other people. But then you're riding a slightly different bike to the one you have at home – or at least I was. I got some great support but obviously I wasn't the team's number one rider. It was good while it lasted but I'm happy doing things on my own now."

DBR: Even driving yourself halfway across Europe to get to a race when you know your toughest competitor will fly in, race and fly home?

JD: "I don't mind the driving. It is what it is. It can get a bit boring, a bit tiring at times but I know I have all my own stuff, all the bits and pieces I need with me. There's a lot to be said for that. Knowing that you prepped your own bike is a good feeling. There's less pressure



when you fly in and race but doing my own thing and driving to the races is something I don't mind at all."

DBR: What about having a dedicated outrider, which must be a big advantage for Laia?

JD: "It has its pro and cons. I guess it's good that she has a full-time mechanic but I have by dad and boyfriend at the important races. I also still get some help from Husky so I don't do too badly."

DBR: Back to the world championship again, a new name on the scene is Germany's Maria Franke. She's arrived with quite a bang, mixing things up yourself and Laia at times..."

JD: "It's really good having a new rider in the

class, especially one that is a real racer [she's a former Women's MXGP competitor] and someone that's close to Laia and myself. It certainly spices things up a bit. New riders are always a good thing."

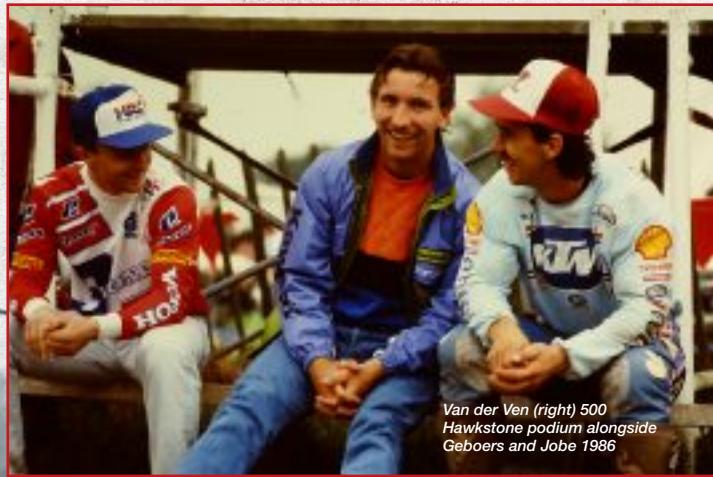
DBR: There's a break of some six or seven weeks now before the Enduro World Championship final in France. What's the game plan for the final round show down with Laia?

JD: "I'm going to do what I can to be as ready as I can to take the fight to her. But I want to enjoy the event – whatever happens will happen. I hope to have the edge but we'll see. The weather will be what it is, that might help me, it might not. I just want to know that I've done all I can do and then time will tell. Laia

is a few points ahead so there's certainly everything to go for. I'll try and treat it as just another event and hope for the best."

DBR: Finally, you might not be thinking too much further ahead than the final round of the EWC but do you have any plans for racing a little further down the line?

JD: "I'd like to go to the States and try a few GNCC races. Not necessarily next year or the year after that but some time in the future. I enjoy Hare and Hound style races so, yeah, going to America for some races would be good. I'd also like to go to Australia and try some events over there. I like experiencing stuff, different events. Trying different events is what I enjoy..."



BURNICLE'S BEAT

DASHING DUTCHMEN!

As well as hosting the very first motocross international and being home to some of the finest sand circuits in the world, The Netherlands has also bred some exceedingly fast MX talent as Jack Burnicle explains . . .

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle



Rond (Suzuki) finishing second in 1980 Dutch 500GP at Valkenswaard



US Supercross champ Pierre Karsmakers brings his AMA shirt and Honda's first 500 to Hawkstone Park in 1975





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Jeffrey Herlings is already, by a substantial margin, the most successful Dutch motocrosser in the sport's history. For despite being a country that has always boasted massive spectator support and accumulated almost two dozen grand prix tracks its roster of world class GP winning riders scarcely makes double figures.

In fact the first ever world championship event actually took place in the Netherlands when Wassenaar, situated just six miles north-east of The Hague on the North Sea coast, hosted the inaugural Motocross des Nations team contest in 1947! Then in May 1948 the Moto Club of Imola launched Italy's first international motocross race round the steeply sloping wooded hillside of Parco delle Acque Minerali, on the banks and even along the pebbled bed of the River Santerno south of Bologna.

A Matchless-mounted Dutch squad entered and Ben Jansema won the first moto from compatriot Hendrik Rietman. Hendrik chased home Belgium's MX des Nations star Marcel Meunier (Triumph) in the mammoth 54-minute second moto to clinch overall honours for Holland, with countrymen Jansema and Joop van Henkelam fourth and fifth.

Later that year at Spa Francorchamps in Belgium van Henkelam was a member of the first Netherlands team to mount an MX des Nations rostrum, third behind Belgium and Great Britain. And Hendrik Rietman featured in 1955 when the Dutchmen finished third again in Denmark. It would be another 17 years before Holland mounted the podium, back on sandy home soil in Norg. Meantime burly Broer Dirkx, riding a Gold Star BSA, made his mark in 500GPs during their formative world

championship years, finishing fourth in 1959 behind Swedish superstars Sten Lundin and Bill Nilsson and fourth in the 1962 Italian GP at Imola.

Two years later Jan van der Hoek, on a Greeves, placed 10th in Imola's only 250GP (ahead of a dashing teenaged rookie called Roger De Coster!), but it was at the end of the sixties that Holland's first motocross megastar emerged. A broad-shouldered, bespectacled dentist from Amsterdam, Gerrit Wolsink appeared aboard a Husqvarna in 1969 and spent four seasons on the Swedish machines. Twice 10th in the 500cc world championships in 1970 and 1972, he also joined Frans Sigmans and Pierre Karsmakers to achieve that third place finish at Norg's MX des in Northern Holland. Broer Dirkx, meanwhile, was trying his hand on three wheels, finishing second in the Belgian round of the 1971 European Sidecar Cross championship on an Italian Laverda and reaching the top 10 in the 1973 series on a Norton with a rostrum in Sweden!

Wolsink improved to fifth in the world on a Maico in 1973, winning his first grand prix in France. This impressed Suzuki, who signed the Dutchman to race alongside their 500 world champion De Coster. His bearded former MX des team-mate Karsmakers emigrated to the States where, hired by Yamaha, he won both 1973 250 AMA MX honours and the first ever supercross series in 1974 before Honda stepped in and made him the highest paid motocrosser on the planet!

Wolsink improved to fourth in the world that year, winning the second ever USGP round Carlsbad's gruelling blue groove hard pack in Southern California. The pair clashed the following season when Karsmakers debuted

Honda's red 'fire engine', their first 500cc grand prix bike. Pierre drew first blood at St Gabriel, in Canada (his only ever grand prix victory) but Wolsink beat him hands down at Hawkstone Park as well as winning again at Carlsbad and topping the Dutch GP in Lichtenvoorde.

Karsmakers ended the Honda Racing Corporation's rookie year 10th overall while Wolsink, third in the world, proved emphatically that Dutchmen couldn't only ride their native sand. In 1976 he took the world title to the wire against team-mate De Coster, winning round the grasslands of St Gabriel and Payerne, in Switzerland, the dramatic dash through sandy pinewoods at Ruskeasanta in Finland and completing his hat-trick at Carlsbad to become an unlikely American legend! Eventually Gerrit fell five points short of toppling De Coster in what was his best ever season.

Third again in 1977, Wolsink slipped to fifth in '78 despite winning his home GP at St Anthonis and was joined at Suzuki in 1979 by fellow Dutchman Gerard Rond. 'Rondo' had established himself on a Yamaha in 125GPs, finishing second to Gaston Rahier in 1977 after winning the Czech and Polish rounds. A robust, confident young man whose swashbuckling style pre-empted the US superstars of the '80s, Gerard then fought a fabulous season-long duel with the works Suzukis of Rahier and Akira Watanabe in 1978.

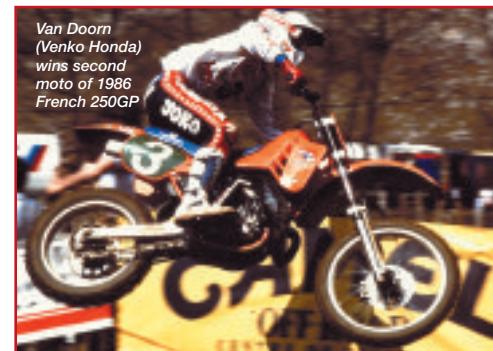
He beat them on both blue groove and sandy circuits at Lanklaar, in Belgium (a track that curiously combined both loose sand and hard-pack each side of a central ridge), his hometown track at Apeldoorn, in Denmark and at Meyrin, in Switzerland. But machine frailties with the superfast watercooled YZ125 tuned by his father meant catastrophic breakdowns >>



Fabulous 125 fight between Dave Strijbos and Ron Lechien (3) in 1985 MX des



Elated Dutchmen (l-r) van der Ven, van Doorn and Strijbos second in 1985 MX des



Van Doorn (Venko Honda) wins second moto of 1986 French 250GP



Kees van der Ven (Venko Maico) wins 1980 Finnish 250GP

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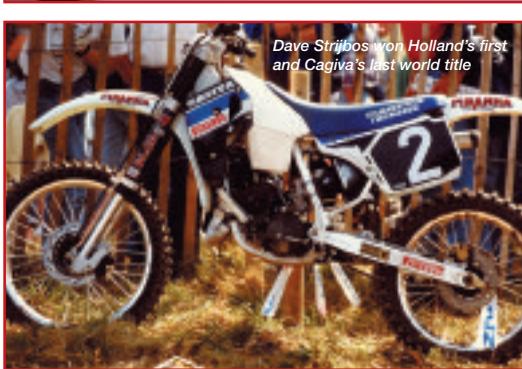
Gert-Jan van Doorn flies to second place in 1985 MX des



Swedish victory in 1986 and Kees van der Ven becomes first man to win 125, 250 and 500cc GPs



Rond leads the Netherlands to second place in the 1980 MX des at Farleigh



Dave Strijbos won Holland's first and Cagiva's last world title



in France and Germany ultimately cost Rondo dear and he lost out to the Suzukis at a dramatic finale in Czechoslovakia.

Other grand prix riders of this era were pure sand specialists like Sigmans, Karsmakers' brother Toon and Jeffrey Herlings' dad Peter who, after winning the famous pre-season international at St Anthonis, scored top 10 points at high speed sand circuits in Sweden, Finland and back home at Markelo.

At the same time a slim, moustachioed youth emerged from Bakel, in southern Holland near Eindhoven, riding a Maico in 250GPs. Modest and unassuming, Kees van der Ven presented quite a contrast to the ebullient Rondo! He won his first GP in his rookie season of 1979 round the rapid sandy roller coaster of Hyvinkaa, in Finland. Fifth in the world he won at Hyvinkaa again in 1980 and improved to second overall behind Georges Jobe's Suzuki before moving to KTM. Kees would spend the rest of his career with the Austrian manufacturer. Victorious at Hawkstone Park in 1981 he placed third in the world behind his pal Neil Hudson and Jobe.

The following February van der Ven rode an open class Katoom to the first of his extraordinary five successive victories in the three-hour beach marathon at Le Touquet, during that era when all the major motocross manufacturers entered their top athletes in the prestigious French event. He then became embroiled in a sizzling season-long battle with Jobe and Danny LaPorte for the 1982 world title. The second European vainqueur of Unadilla's US 250GP (defeating Ricky Johnson and David Bailey!) van der Ven completed a Finnish hat-trick at Hyvinkaa that took the fight into the final round at Vimmerby, in southern Sweden, where he once more graciously accepted third in the world.

Rondo's unexpected leap on to a 500 Suzuki netted 10th overall in 1979, his best result third in Belgium while Wolsink once more fought for the crown. Victorious in Canada and for a fabulous fourth time at Carlsbad, Gerrit also won the Dutch round in Markelo, though he critically lost out to title rival Graham Noyce (Honda) on the last lap of race two. Second

in the world once more Wolsink parted with Suzuki and returned to Maico before seeing out his career on a private Honda.

Rondo stayed with Suzuki for 1980, improving to sixth in the table, his best result second overall at Valkenswaard. Later that year he led Holland to second place in the MX des Nations at Farleigh Castle alongside Wolsink, van der Ven and Toon Karsmakers. Moving to KTM in 1981 he finished seventh, with a couple of third places in Italy and France. But he was seriously injured in a dreadful accident at Le Touquet when his KTM, flat out in top, hit and killed a woman crossing the beach with her child. Back with Suzuki after a long recuperation Rondo lost out by a single point to Andre Malherbe in the championship deciding final round of 1983 at St Anthonis. It was the nearest he ever came to 500cc grand prix glory.

Van der Ven had meanwhile been ordered into 125GPs by KTM. The uncomplaining Dutchman accepted the move with typical equanimity and leapt into 1984 with verve, winning seven of the first nine motos to open up a commanding lead in the championship. Then he snapped his wrist, recovering in time to rescue third place behind Italy's first world champion Michele Rinaldi. But in Holland victory went to an upstart 16 year-old on a private WP Honda. Managed by Gerrit Wolsink the fair curly-haired Dave Strijbos, from Oss in southern Holland, ended the season sixth overall, with his school pal John van den Berk 13th.

Then in 1985 van der Ven, victorious in Germany, missed the last two rounds and slipped to fourth in the table just ahead of Yamaha-mounted van den Berk while Strijbos fought a season-long duel for the championship with Finnish teenager Pekka Vehkonen on a factory Cagiva. Unfortunately Davey, victorious on his home track at Oss, Hoeselt in Belgium and Agueda's first ever Portuguese Grand Prix, was disqualified in Germany for changing bikes between timed training and the first moto. This indiscretion – owned up to by a rueful Wolsink many years later! – handed Vehkonen the title by nine points...

Van der Ven's place in 250GPs had been

taken by Suzuki-mounted teenager Gert-Jan van Doorn, who won the second round of 1984 at Sittendorf, in Austria and finished the year sixth overall. Moving on in 1985 to a private Venko Honda sponsored by a massive jovial paint magnate and tuned by Dutch legend Jan de Groot, van Doorn was victorious again in Austria then suffered a mid-season dip before banging out wins in four of the last six motos to finish a fine third.

These dashing Dutchmen crowned their season with a flourish. Gaildorf, in Germany, hosted the first Motocross des Nations to combine all three classes in the same contest and we witnessed three epic 60 rider races. Strijbos engaged in a mighty 125 feud with American champion Ron Lechien, van der Ven crushed David Bailey and newly crowned 500 world champion Dave Thorpe, van Doorn chased home US 250 champ Jeff Ward and the Netherlands ran the States close to clinch a thrilling second place!

Van der Ven's performance impressed KTM and he joined his close friend Heinz Kinigadner on a 500 for 1986. Triumphant back at Vimmerby in Sweden this consummate all-rounder became the first man ever to win 125, 250 and 500cc GPs and finished fifth in the world behind HRC's heavyweights and Jobe's Kawasaki.

Van Doorn once more claimed the bronze medal on his 250 Venko Honda. A superb, shy stylist thwarted by inconsistency Gert-Jan claimed the opening moto of the year in the Dutch GP at Venray, won again at Villars in France and cleaned up the final round in Sweden.

But the icing on Holland's best season yet was supplied by Dave Strijbos who, signed by Cagiva, controlled the 125 series ahead of his mate van den Berk. 17 rostrums and grand prix victories at home, where he completed his Dutch hat-trick at Mill, Genk in Belgium and Argentina meant that two months short of his 19th birthday Dave Strijbos became not only the Netherlands' first World Champion but also the youngest in 30 years of the World Motocross Championship...

DBR
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THE FAST N' DIRTY!

THE TEST SQUAD PICK UP THE PACE IN SEARCH OF DIRT BIKE AND DIRT BIKE PRODUCT PERFECTION...

Words by Max Hind and Dan Grove Photos by TooFast Media Group and Martin Pickard

The ol' RM-Z250 has been running nicely – as always – since the last update with no changes or additions although I have finally tried out the lean fuel map!

So, my findings with the lean map were that it was noticeably different to the richer map that I had been running and the biggest difference was that it wore me out pretty quickly thanks to the improved responsiveness that it delivered. It's much more aggressive compared to the rich map but it's not night and day different.

With this being my first experience with this type of modification I wasn't sure what to expect exactly. You can definitely feel the difference as the revs pick up quicker and it signs off a little bit sooner however this difference in power characteristics did make me fatigue a little before the end of a practice session. Where I say it's not night and day different I mean that it's not unrideable and hard to control and I think in time I'd probably adjust to it.

On tracks that are tacky or sandy I think you'd gain the most benefit from this map as the bike would just hook up in these conditions and in sand especially you'd get it in the sweet spot of the power out of corners much sooner and get yourself up on top of the bumps and over the holes easier which in turn would make riding sand more enjoyable and less tiring.

I'll put my theory to the test by the next issue and head up north to FatCat or Doncaster Moto Parc and I'll also get to some new tracks because I've had enough of the nonsense that goes down at local tracks to me. I'm also going to get back into racing pronto as practice tracks have made me realise how much I miss it and by the time you read this I should have had my second race of the year with further races planned with the Acerbis Nationals, the South West Premier and MX Nationals. Plus, I've always said that to test a bike or product properly you have to race with it.

Unfortunately I picked up a minor back injury that kept me off the bike for a few weeks however prior to this I rode at the Suzuki Day of Champions ride day and I also rode one of their demo 450s and also the 250 that are both prepared by Geoff Walker who used to be the technical editor of this magazine and now owns and runs the SR75 Molson Racing Suzuki team.

The suspension on his 250 was fantastic and was actually standard equipment but it was clearly set up very well so in my downtime I sent SR75 Racing the shock and he set it up to a personal level taking into account my weight and speed using the stock spring – as I'd had it changed previously – and in my one ride since, my backs not hurt but more importantly the riding experience has gone up a level!

I increased the pressure to 33psi in the forks – and had 50ml of oil removed elsewhere a couple of months ago – and set the compression clickers at 10 out (seven out is standard) and I kept the rebound settings as standard. With the shock, both high and low speed compression clickers are on 14 out and both rebound adjusters are on 10 out and I'm pretty sure that these settings will remain until Suzuki has the bike back.

That one ride since the shock was sorted has been the most enjoyable day that I've had on the little RM-Z so far and now that it's set up exactly how I like it I can crack on and start racing it. For this ride I also went back to the standard fuel map and it was a lot different to the richer map that I had been using as the revs picked up a lot quicker and made the bike feel much more responsive, so I'll stick with this for the time being as the bike was perfect all day. I think with my transition to the four-stroke I was trying to ride it like a 250 two-stroke and the richer fuel map helped however I don't think that's the way to ride a 250F to their full potential as I certainly felt much faster. You really need to rev these things!

Also while the shock was out I checked over the linkage bearings and they looked just like

they did when I greased them up after collecting the bike back in November. I'm pretty sure these will stay like this for the rest of the year as there was no sign of dirt or moisture getting in them. Also in my little break from riding I oiled up the clutch and throttle cables as I hadn't yet done that so now the action is much smoother and I also greased up the rear brake pedal pivot bolt. It's the little things that make a big difference sometimes...

Last month I don't think I mentioned one thing about the bike I just wrote about the parts that I'd added to it so I'll give you a quick update. It still starts up and runs just fine and the only thing that I've replaced parts wise is an ignition cover gasket which only showed a small sign of wear because of the oil changes, as one of the oil strainers is behind this cover. That's a lot of riding to only replace a £7 part!

I'd read lots of stuff about the quality of the bolts for example on Suzuki's but I've not lost, broke, or round one off yet and I am a little heavy handed with the spanners so that should tell you something... That the quality of the parts on the bike is excellent or that I'm not a heavy handed idiot!

On each oil change I have a quick look at the clutch basket through the oil filler hole and there are no marks on it or any play in the plates when you pull the kickstart down. I'm not having any clutch issues but if I do it's only a five minute job to get the cover off for a proper inspection. The Putoline Nano Tech oil still comes out a shade of blue after three rides so it's certainly not getting too hot in there...

There is a little bit of play coming in the clutch perch and lever but it's not noticeable while riding. However, I might look into an aftermarket perch if it gets worse quickly but I think it'll be good for the rest of the year. Apart from this there's nothing else showing signs of wear or damage after around 13 hours of use so hopefully that should tell you just how good of a package the little Suzuki is...







SHIFT WHIT3 LABEL NINETY SEVEN



The awesome guys over at Shift recently hooked us up with a fresh set of threads to keep us looking sharp on track. They sent over a pair of black Whit3 label pants and couple of different jerseys in two different colour ways. The great thing here is that the black pants can quite literally go with anything so if you're like me (a bit of a tart) you can continuously change up your look throughout the day – and the season – to keep up to date with all the high fashion moto trends without splashing major cash on new pants.

As we know – through the brand's supported riders Josh Hansen and Jeremy 'Twitch' Stenberg – Shift's main ideology is to have fun riding dirt bikes and to look damn well cool while doing so. Style is important at Shift so it makes sense that this Whit3 label swag is both striking and sexy.

The simplicity of the design is, in my opinion, far superior and much cooler than the messy colour orgies that a lot of brands employ nowadays. Shift sent us the Red Jersey and the White Jersey to go with the Black pants – that combo together with the Fox V3 helmet and the Fox Instinct boot results in a pretty bitchin' set up and a look that is on point with the trendiest kids on the block and as I always say looking good and feeling fast is always the most important thing.

The Whit3 Label stuff is the second tier Shift product line beneath the 3lack label stuff. Despite this the gear doesn't feel cheap although it is very affordable. The fabric feels like quality stuff yet the construction and design is fairly simple. The Whit3 label range brings you that unique Shift 'coolness' at more affordable prices.

In terms of technical details the Ninety Seven Whit3 label jerseys employ technical polyester fabrics to provide a moisture wicking function and that basically means it'll soak up your sweat to keep you dry and aid in temperature control. I have to say this is a much needed function. The Jerseys aren't ventilated quite so well as others on the market and the fabric feels a little thick and heavy to the touch which means that if you're riding on a hot day you're going to be sweating buckets. But that's something we can cope with on the two hot days we get per year.

I've been impressed with the overall durability of the Ninety Seven pant so far, they seem to be holding up well in the usual problem spots around the inside of the knee. The pants have been designed to conform to the rider while in the ride position and this contoured fit is something I really dig about the jeans. The specifically located stretch zones ensure that this contoured fit doesn't restrict movement.

Overall I'm digging my new Shift set up even if it is just because I look pretty damn bad-ass walking through the pits!

Price: Jersey and pants £89.95

Supplier: foxhead.com/uk

Contact: 0800 345 7175

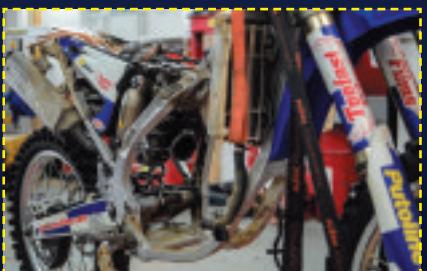
TO THE

BACK FUTURE!



**DBR'S
EQUIVALENT
TO DOC BROWN
(THAT'S ROLAND
SHAW) GETS
TO GRIPS WITH
MAX'S WEAPON -
GREAT SCOTT!**

Words and photos by Max Hind



So we kick off episode two of the 'Back to the Future' YZ 125 project in the laboratory of our very own Dr Emmett Brown – aka The Hardcore Racing workshop. Although in the place of Christopher Lloyd playing Doc Brown we have HCR's Roland Shaw – who is his very own brand of mad professor.

As you'll see from the photos the bike has now been pulled apart with the engine now on the bench and split open. I just want to take a couple of seconds to go back to the mission in hand for any readers that may not have seen episode one of this series – our objective here is to take our very own haggard old 2010 YZ 125 and bring it back to the future and up to date in order to be competitive with the ultra-modern Husqvarna and KTM 125s both in terms of aesthetics and performance.

If there were a version of Top Trumps for motocross bikes you wouldn't currently want to get landed with the YZ125 card, it only pumps out somewhere in the region of 34 BHP compared to the white and orange hitting over the 40 BHP mark – you'll be losing that round my friend!

That shouldn't put you off buying a YZ125 though with its legendary reliability, handling and suspension the little blue smoker is a great base to improve upon. With a little bit of Doc Brown knowhow we are going to show you how the YZ125 can be transformed into the ultimate 125cc weapon.

In this episode we are looking at tuning the engine and figuring out where we are going to squeeze some extra ponies from her. As well as that we've also got an insight in to how we are going to take our tired old bike and make it look as fresh as the day it came out of the factory once again...

So the first place in which we are going to pinch some horsepower from is surprisingly not the engine but in fact the gearbox. Gearbox drag will account to a loss in horsepower which is at least equal to the gain you can get by blueprinting a cylinder or cylinder head. Hardcore Racing have a process that gives all of the relevant gearbox components a "super finish"! This finish results in less drag, better shifting and more power to the rear wheel – all of which sounds pretty good to me. The price for said work is £179.99 which isn't really a massive amount to fork out for some significant gain.

But we need to find some extra ponies and usable power from somewhere in order to get our project bike up to the level that we want it. That said it's important to keep her all legal and above board for the 125 class so that means no big bore kits!

To achieve this we have employed a couple of interesting modification methods. The first being a long-rod/VHM piston conversion. Basically this increases the intake duration which in turn increases the power from the mid to top-end. The rod we are using is a genuine Yamaha item but is

3mm longer than the stock 2010 rod. The VHM piston is 3mm shorter than stock to compensate (from the top of the gudgeon pin hole to the crown of the piston).

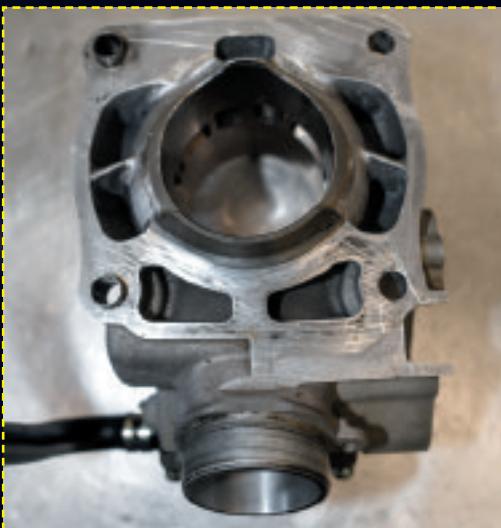
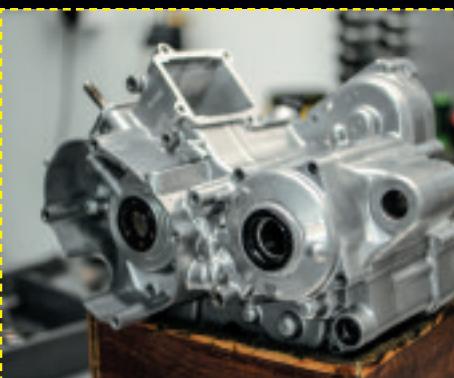
This is an above board, race legal mod that can be bought as a kit or the work can be carried out at Hardcore Racing. By changing the length of the rod you don't actually change the distance the piston travels so you're not actually changing the stroke or increasing the cubic capacity of the engine. Essentially the mod changes the angle between the small end bearing and big end bearing and increases the duration of the induction therefore you pull in more fuel and air, hence the performance gain. The kit itself is £185 or you can contact Hardcore for a quote to do the entire job for a very reasonable price.

The next rung on our performance gain ladder is getting some work done to the barrel. Like all good recipes Hardcore like to keep the juicy ingredients secret but I can tell you that it includes some work to the transfer ports and main exhaust port. In the next episode we'll also tell you about the bolt-on performance enhancing goodies that we are adding to the bike that will help us accomplish our quest for ultimate 125 power.

I mentioned earlier that not only do we want to see some significant performance gains, we want our bike to look aesthetically pleasing too – basically I want the most bitchin' bike in the paddock. The first stage in this process involves another service that's available in the Hardcore workshop and I have to say it's pretty impressive. The machine used is called a vapour blaster and Roland is a dab hand at using it. The blaster literally takes tatty looking metal components (like engine casings) and transforms them back to looking like new.

The process basically cleans all the oil and contamination out of the metal and massages the surfaces slightly in effect taking it back to new. You'll see in the before and after photos of our engine cases just how effective this process is. In a later issue you'll also see how it has transformed other parts of the bike such as the frame and swing arm...

So tune in to the next issue of DBR to find out what's next. In the great words of Dr Emmett Brown – 'If my calculations are correct when this baby hits 88 miles per hour you're gonna see some serious sh*t'! ...





EAST ANGLIA SUPER TRAX HAS THE OFFICIAL ROYAL BLESSING OF PRICE PHILIP BUT HOW DOES THE PLACE RIDE? OUR DIRT BIKE PRINCESS TOOFAST MAX GRACED 'EAST TRAX' WITH HIS PRESENCE TO FIND OUT...

Opened back in 2002 by none other than His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh East Anglia Super Trax (better known as East Trax) has become a go to dirt bike destination for many in the East of England mainly due to the fact that the track is open to the public every single day of the week.

As far as we're aware East Trax is the only practice facility in the UK that's open to the public seven days a week which is a real bonus! Located deep in the Cambridgeshire fens, East Trax quite obviously doesn't feature any elevation changes but despite this East Trax boasts a fun (albeit fairly tight) layout that features some fast sections as well as lots and lots of corners.

In 2010 the track underwent a major face lift, gaining a massive extension (boosting the total track length to 1.7 miles) and integrating some much-needed softer soil to the hard packed base.

When prepped correctly this soil can be absolutely gorgeous, the silt used is very loamy and provides grip for days. When it's like this you find a nice mixture of ruts and soft berms to dig

into. The new extension is tight and twisty making for great corner practice. Overall the layout of the track is fun and flowy, fast in places and tight in others. However the extension is usually only open on Sundays.

The nature of opening everyday of the week means that sometimes you may turn up on a weekday and have the entire track to yourself. However the price you pay for your only personal circuit for the day comes in the form of a not so perfectly prepped track.

The track is freshly graded and watered on weekends but no so on week days. This means that you never really know what conditions you're going to get when you turn up in the week. When DBR arrived it was mega dusty. However, due to the fact that it was a very quiet day this dust didn't affect the riding/visibility all too much. As mentioned the track doesn't get all too busy in the week which means no sessions, just roll on roll off. By doing this you can easily have your fill of riding done by just after lunch!

We can live with that but the only thing really

worth taking note of on the midweek riding days is the lack of marshals. On weekends the track features flaggers and marshals but the same can't be said for week days. So I'd definitely advise you never to go riding alone at East Trax – always bring a buddy just in case the worst happens.

East Trax has a range of facilities that include a resident photographer (Harry Lessman), a burger van (only on weekends), spares and parts shop, toilets and a kids track. East Trax also host MX try out days for beginners just getting in to the sport.

I've had many a fun ride at East Trax through the years and with the conditions you'll have no end of fun ripping up this Fenland field!

CONCLUSION

A cool place to shred some laps

Difficulty—low to medium

Fun factor—medium to high

Facilities—pretty much covered

Overall DBR score—the only place in the UK that you can ride every single day of the week — we dig that!

TRACK ATTACK!



ESSENTIAL INFO!

EAST ANGLIA SUPER TRAX (EAST TRAX)

Location: Wisbech, PE14 7LB

Length: 1.7 miles

Prices: Adults £30, kids from £20 to £25

Contact: 01945 780786

Surface: Hardpack base silt on top

Shop: Yes

Catering: Yes (weekends only)

Kids Track: Yes

Coaching: Yes

Toilets/wash block: Yes

Opening times: Mon – Sun 11am – 4pm

Difficulty: Low to medium

Enjoyment Factor: High

Suitability: Everyone

Session length: Various

Groups: Various

Project

WITH A CAREER-BEST RESULT AT ROUND FIVE OF THE MAXXIS MXY2 SERIES AT LEUCHARS, THE HARD WORK IS STARTING TO PAY OFF FOR DBR PROJECT PILOT JOE CADWALLADER – ALL HE NEEDS TO DO NOW IS GET RID OF A PESKY VIRUS...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira

It's been a positive month for Joe Cadwallader but a virus has stopped him getting even better results on the RMJ Academy FC 250 Husqvarna UK machine.

After being out of action with a broken hand he bounced back into action at the Maxxis MXY2 round at the start of July at Leuchars and recorded his best result so far with an 11-10 scorecard for 10th overall.

"Leuchars was good but I felt drained," said the 17-year-old. "I'd run with the top six up until halfway and then started dropping back which isn't really normally like me but it was still a good weekend – my best overall finish in the British championship."

"The week before I went to Holland to train and ended up spending a night in the van and only got four hours sleep which I think led to the virus. I'd done loads of really hard training every day and hadn't really had much of a rest and that tipped me over and I started getting a bad throat and earache."

"Over the weekend I just had a lack of energy. At the end of a race I normally feel okay and don't slacken off too much but I was drained and didn't feel up to it."

A week later Joe was back to Leuchars to make his debut in the Thor British Youth Nationals where he qualified seventh and posted some impressive lap times but he was still feeling ill and ended the weekend 11th.

Bad starts and crashes saw him out of the points at the Blaxhall round of the Maxxis MXY2 in mid-July but he knows his performance was affected by his illness so, overall, he's feeling positive.

"I've had some blood tests but will have to wait for almost a week for the results. If they're clear then I'm aiming for more top-10 results at round seven of the Maxxis series at Preston Docks."

"I've ridden at Preston Docks loads over the years and have probably been there three or four times this season. I enjoy the track and I'm really getting used to the Evo-Tech bike with the new BOS suspension. The bike's great and it's very strong."

Despite Joe's illness, RMJ Academy boss Richard-Mike

Jones feels he's had a positive month.

"Joe's progress results wise at the MXY2 at Leuchars has been his best result so far this season," he said. "He got a personal best in qualifying – he was 12th – and followed that up with two personal best results so he's going in the right direction and his speed is definitely coming on."

"His improvement has been massive. He's got good bike ability, it's just a case of pulling all the pieces together and that's what we have been doing but we've still got a long way to go."

Inevitably, Joe's illness has had a knock-on effect on his training and Richard-Mike has had to tailor his programme.

"Because Joe's been ill we've been restricted in the fitness training we can do. It's had to be very, very low intensity and then on the bike it's been short and sharp. This is good for speed so we've been able to keep progressing that side of things but it's had implications on his fitness which has definitely cost him some better results."

"As long as his blood tests come back all good and we can start pushing on again we'll be fine because we've got time to work on a bit of fitness before then."

"If he's still got the fever and he's still rundown and we start pushing him hard it's going to have a negative effect. We want to go to Holland next week to train but if he's still got a virus that won't be productive and as tough as it will be for him not to go we'll have to make that call."

If Joe can recover in time Richard-Mike is confident he'll be well prepared for Preston Docks on August 21.

"Since he's been with me we've only trained there once but for sure we'll be getting there a good few times before the next round and I'd say he'll be more ready for that round than any other round he's done so far under my supervision."

DBR will be following Joe and the RMJ Academy Husqvarna every month so stay tuned for further updates...









Mountain Men!

**SCOTT SPORTS TEAM UP WITH
MONSTER ENERGY TO OFFER DBR AN
UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE MXGP ELITE
ARE USING MOUNTAIN BIKES AS AN INTEGRAL
PART OF THEIR TRAINING SCHEDULES...**

Words by Dan Grove Photos by Ray Archer

I don't know anyone that didn't own a mountain bike or BMX when they grew up and if you're anything like me, you rode it to death on a daily basis and received a proper bollocking every time you rode it in the rain and mud on some local wasteland while trying to emulate your favourite motocross riders. If this was just me then this opening paragraph is a little embarrassing but I'm pretty sure I'm not alone...

So I think it's safe to say that everyone reading this probably owns a mountain bike nowadays too and after attending a recent ride with some MXGP rippers, one of them claimed to use their mountain bike for 75 to 80 per cent of their training that takes place during the racing season. So if you own a mountain bike you could also get on the same training schedule as an MXGP racer.

So what's this got to do with motocross? Well, the day prior to the British MX GP I found myself in some woodland adjacent to the race track with many other media folk attending the first Scott Sports media ride day where we all rode demo models of their Genius 910 mountain bike that's new for 2016.

In actual fact there's some pretty awesome single track near to the motocross track so it was definitely a fair test of some serious MTB hardware and fortunately the ride began after the rain had stopped. The trail featured plenty of cool features and it was almost like the trail was set up just for the ride as it would make a perfect demonstration loop however the trail was too broken in to be fresh and there were plenty of tyre tracks imprinted into the soil already.

Linked up with sweeping and off-camber corners, a few roots, steady climbs and some fast descents tied up a sweet little trail for our ride as it wound around the trees where the branches played host to the greenest and largest of leaves thanks to a pretty wet and warm spring that the UK endured this year.

Also along for the ride were Scott goggle athletes Clement Desalle, Jordi Tixier, Petar Petrov and Britain's own Shaun Simpson so it was definitely a new experience for me. Thanks to Adam Wheeler from On Track Off Road magazine for the invite and the opportunity to take part in something like this because it was awesome... >>

► JUSTIN BARCIA



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NO SHORTCUTS

—
40 years of Goggle research and design have all led to the introduction of our newest and most advanced MX goggle to date. The SCOTT PROSPECT offers a Massive field of vision, 50mm Works Film Systems and our proprietary Lens Lock System, giving you the ability to focus on what matters.



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SCOTT-SPORTS.COM

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SCOTT

Shaun Simpson gives it some stick in a dense copse

Scott is a brand that everyone reading this magazine must have seen or at least heard of but what I didn't know was that they're pretty huge in the mountain bike world too – making bikes and a clothing range to compliment them.

The motocross goggles have been around longer than a lot of us – they came onto the scene in the 1970s while the mountain bikes came into play in the early '90s. If you're unfamiliar with the name then chances are you won't be for long as they're making strides into the winter sport and running sectors as well as the staple motocross and cycling products, covering both on and off-road pedal bikes.

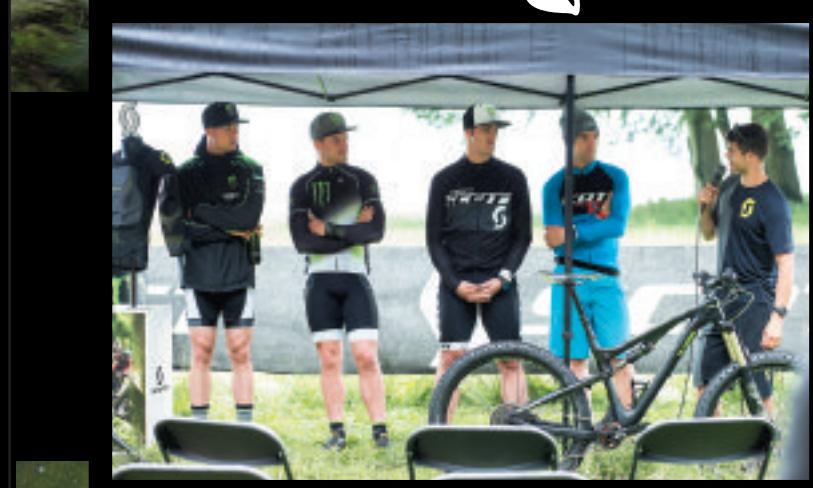
Scott employs around 800 staff worldwide with an all new building currently being constructed that will house 600 of them so there's some major investment going on in Givisiez in Switzerland where Scott is based.

I've recently purchased a new mountain bike however it only cost about 10 per cent of the price of the Scott bike that I rode. I'm not a super keen off-road cyclist – although I used to be – so I thought I'd invest in something that I'd enjoy riding and was a serious upgrade from my old bike. As I'm not quite up to speed with the mountain bike world the £3800 price tag that was announced during the pre-ride briefing was certainly a surprise to me and had me even more interested in these bikes because I mean how good was this bike going to be? The answer is very good.

These bikes are specced with plus size wheels that are 27.5 inches while the standard is 26 inches – this helps them roll over rocks, roots and bumps better. The wheels are fitted with 2.8 inch tubeless tyres that looked like something off an 85cc motocross bike – they were big! They offered up a 21 per cent contact patch and you could tell when riding across wet roots as the tyres didn't lose grip. The downside is an increased drag of around one per cent but what you gain is worth the unnoticeable drag.

Suspension wise this bike comes with 140mm of travel on the forks and 130mm on the rear and what is unique with Scott bikes – and they have a patent for this – is their TwinLoc technology that means you can click a lever on the bars and it will lock out the suspension front and rear while riding. You don't even have to slow down!

>>





Jordi Tixier cruises through the trees

One click stiffens the front fork and restricts the travel at the back to 90mm so when you're climbing up a hill the geometry of the bike changes which helps it climb easier. If you press the lever again this will lock the bike out completely so if you had a road to connect two off-road trails on you won't lose any forward momentum as the suspension won't be soaking up your energy.

The Genius Scott bike weighs in at 13.2 kilos for a medium frame with the front section of the frame being full carbon fibre and the back end aluminium.

The SRAM drive train system features only one cog on the front and 11 cogs on the rear. The largest of these is a huge 42 tooth for the steepest climbs which actually offers a lower ratio than what's commonly found on bikes with two or three cogs on the front.

Riding it was really was like a motocross bike without an engine, the way the bike handled on the downhills and sweeping corners and the feel of the brakes and suspension was so similar that I can now see why mountain bikes are a vital training tool for riders at MXGP level.

Just like the price tag, I was equally surprised to hear Shaun Simpson reveal that 75 to 80 per cent of his training during the motocross season is done on his Scott mountain bike. I never thought it would be this high and I was expecting an answer of no more than 25 per cent. On the other hand every rider out there has their own training schedule as everyone is different and the same training program won't work for everyone. I expect some guys he

races with do a lot more running for example...

With Shaun living in Belgium it must be pretty hard to get a tough training cycle done on a road bike as the land is pretty flat. This isn't the case with mountain biking in Belgium as Shaun explained after I challenged him on just how much use he gets out of his Scott bike. "In Belgium there are events called Tour Tochts," he says. "These are organised mountain bike rides and there are three a week – Wednesday evenings and Saturday and Sunday mornings – with loops of 20km, 60km or 100km that take in sand roads and small hills and after 600 or so riders have been through you've got a trail."

With a hectic motocross schedule Shaun will ride the Wednesday evening events where possible however during the winter he'll take in the weekend rides as a warm up for an afternoon on his KTM. Away from the Tour Tochts, Shaun will use some of the new trails created at past events for his own rides during a normal week of training so that every ride he goes on is different.

This is certainly a lot different than the monotony found with road cycling. With short climbs of 40 to 50 feet littered on these Tour Tocht rides this simulates the intensity and the heart rate pattern that's found in motocross racing as we all know that if you have a close call after making a mistake or you're in a battle your heart rate will spike just like it would on these steep climbs that are littered along the courses.

So after riding the Scott Genius 910 in the Matterley Basin woods it's got me thinking that





I need to upgrade my mountain bike again as this type of training is probably the most enjoyable and beneficial to motocross riders across the globe. Since then I've also been inspired to get out on my mountain bike a lot more which I have done, getting out twice a week whereas earlier this year I'd spent a lot of time running. I can assure you that bikes are more fun than pounding a pavement!

The crossover from mountain bike riding to motocross riding is closer than what you might think – not just in the fact that they're both bikes but that fact that similar techniques are required and your heart rate pattern is so similar while on both bikes. Not to mention that chances are you're not far from some trails that you can ride and if you're near a proper trail centre there's no reason not to get some year round training in as they all seem to have an all weather surface.

In fact if you didn't do any training whatsoever and only chose to do one activity then training off-road on a mountain bike has to be the best option that you can do to improve your speed on a motocross bike and maintain a decent level of fitness.



French photojournalist Pascal Haudiquert tries to drop the chasing peloton



Our man Dan in his new Royal duds courtesy of Decade Europe – cheers guys!



DAN WEARS!

7Protection M2 helmet £59.99
Royal Hextech shorts £49.99
Royal Attitude jersey £29.99
Royal Core gloves £19.99
Model's own socks n' shoes

Supplier: decade-europe.com
Contact: 01792 469811



**KAWASAKI'S 2017 KX250F IS A BIT
OF A BLOODY RIPPER ACCORDING
TO OUR MAIN MAN IN CALIFORNIA...**

Words by Ryan Houghton



D

BR's superstar tester is off on his travels again and I really can't complain too much because this establishment really does treat me well. This month they packed me off to Los Angeles to test the mighty 2017 Kawasaki KX250F.

A decade ago everybody wanted one of these distinctive, powerhouse MX2 class machines. Pro Circuit were ruling the roost over in the States while satellite GP teams like GPKR and Molson ran the Pourcel bros, Swanepoel, Searle et al. Full on factory Kwackers were rare – although our very own Stephen Sword had one – but more recent 'factory' KX-Fs were very much stock machines given Monster Energy backing and then breathed heavily on by Pro Circuit and Steve Dixon. This still did the job though and between them they've won several GPs and AMA titles. Titles on either side of the pond have dried up lately though despite the KX250F still being the most decorated (winningest sounds sh*t) bike in the AMA 250 division.

Anyway....let's get down to business. Kawasaki are determined to change the trophy tide in their direction and have brought to the 2017 table a more powerful and lighter (obviously) machine which they say produces faster lap times. If nothing else the Japanese brand pulled out all the stops in order to impress the band of testers.

Coming to America (good film BTW) is always nice but their tracks are brilliant test beds. Ours for the day was a track called Zaca Station (nope, me neither) and it was absolutely awesome. It's up the pacific coast from LA just north of the traditional SoCal industry hub. You wouldn't believe how nice the dirt is, it's like full traction everywhere. If the ACU ever decided to do flyaway Maxxis races then I'd recommend this place any day of the week!! I was buzzing when I saw it and the track filled me with the confidence to push the bike that extra bit harder. Of course I was doing it all for the benefit of you DBR readers and take my word for it the KX really is fun to ride.

Kawasaki – in America at least – pulled in the help of the legend that is Jeremy McGrath at the back end of 2014 as brand ambassador and he seems to have had a positive influence on the bike.

Kawi have dramatically slimmed the frame of the 250F and have used a different orientation of the radiators to redesign the bodywork. Everything is now in line with the footpegs making it feel skinnier and less bulky. This is something Jeremy was really impressed with. He said the 2016 bike was a bit too bulky and this is a massive improvement on making the 2017 a better bike. Kawi say that the slimmer frame is complemented by an ERGO-FIT adjustable handlebar (4) and footpeg (2) positions, giving you the chance to find your natural riding position making it easier for you the racer to go faster.

For me the four-setting handlebars were fine where they were>>

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Ryan gets to grips with the green meanie at Zaca Station



positioned as standard although the beauty now of course is that if you're a fussy bugger you can play around until you're happy.

I have to say I would defo give this bike nine out 10. Handling wise it's bang on the money. And Kawi have worked hard shaving weight and changing the ergonomics for 2017 for a better more comfortable ride and it's really worked.

The Forks are Showas' very special SFF (separate function fork) with the damping in the left fork and the spring situated in the right leg. Showa have upped the fork diameter to 48mm (from 47mm) and the blurb says that with the increased size of components under the same damping force the type 2 forks work under a lower pressure. Therefore the 48 mm SFF Type 2 is even better equipped to offer both increased riding comfort and firmer damping performance.

Forgetting the science for a mo I reckon they worked like a dream. All I did to the suspension was go two clicks stiffer on the front and slowed the rear down two as well. After that I was away and didn't touch anything after that all day. Basically the Showa kit is more than good enough for standard stuff, in fact very good actually.

Where the Kwacka has had most of its work done is on the engine. I guess this is probably because the KTvarnas and HuskyMs are going like sh*t off a shovel lately and the KX has been left in its Tommy Searle 2011 vintage state. They have fitted a new piston, a new downdraft injector and a new air box design to let more air in.

Damn she's a good 'un. This bike is fast and has a really progressive power curve from bottom all the way to the top so it will suit most styles of rider down to the ground. Kawasaki say that the engine is tuned for >>



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high-performance and is suited to expert riders (no snails please).

Its high-revving character is complemented by superb response. The bike has a dual-injector fuel system which is a first for motocross with a downdraft injector handling low rpm and an upstream injector (close to the air box) which kicks in at high revs and is aimed at giving you more power.

I was definitely impressed with the motor. To be honest the biggest compliment came from the main man himself. McGrath came to me after the first session and said 'dude, you're going really fast, I couldn't keep up at all'. That's nice to hear from a riding perspective (surely I'm quicker than him...he's 44 FFS) but it does show how comfortable I was with the KX250F straightaway.

The only thing that I was a bit miffed about was Kawasaki's claim that

the bike is 1.6seconds faster over a 1m55 lap. Apart from the whole fair test sh*t to be able to prove that claim I reckon if it's true then we'd all be on one of these babies which surely won't be the case. It probably says more about how slow last year's model was than how quick this one is. Don't get me wrong though this bike is well worth looking at if you're in the mood for a change of colour next year.

The ECU is pretty good. I did a session with the standard calmer map on and I felt like the bike was fast but then if you have been reading my tests I always love the aggressive maps and this one didn't disappoint. The moment you pull on the track you can notice the difference which is to have a big change in them. It makes it good power to great power and is nice and simple just how we like it, mate.

The bike has three engine maps (plus launch control) loaded into >>





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the ECU which are accessed at the flick of a switch. If you wanna be flash you can buy the KX FI calibration kit which offers you a choice of seven engine maps and you can feel like a factory mechanic. The beauty of this system is it requires no laptop so it's easy to do and you can play around to your heart's content.

Overall I would rate the new Kwacka really very highly. It handled beautifully – the forks worked well, should've mentioned the Dunlop rubber earlier – that's mega as well – the engine is fast and with a bit a play can be tuned to suit you the rider. Kawasaki say it's for mid to high-level riders but don't let that put you off because it can be detuned. Kawasakis are always well-turned out so whatever way you look at it the 2017 KX250F is definitely a contender for floating voters.



Ryan rates the 2017 KX250F
as being lightweight and
highly flickaboutable



KAWASAKI'S 2017 KX250F TEST

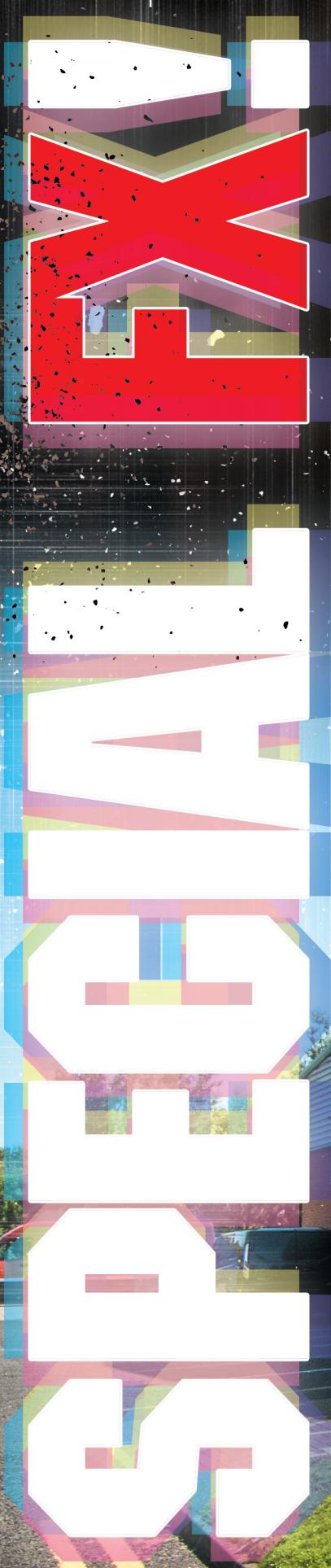


TECH SPECS

KX250F

Displacement: 249cc
Bore and stroke: 77 x 53.6mm
Transmission: 5 gears
Fuel system: 43mm Keihin fuel injection with dual injectors
Front suspension: 48mm Showa SFF USD fork
Rear suspension: Showa monoshock with linkage
Suspension travel front/rear: 310/310mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 270/240 mm
Wheel base: 1475mm
Ground clearance: 320mm
Seat height: 940mm
Fuel capacity: 6.4 litres
Weight: 104.5kg







**DRIVEN BY A PASSION FOR THE SPORT
AND A HARD-WORK ETHIC, IN JUST
13 YEARS PAUL AND SAM IRWIN HAVE
TAKEN BLACKBURN-BASED RACE FX
FROM A HOME-RUN BUSINESS INTO
A GLOBAL BRAND...**

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Elliot Spencer



Motocross is much more than a sport. For the vast majority of fans it's a lifestyle choice – in some cases you could even say an obsession – and no-one knows this better than Paul Irwin.

A former top-flight racer turned successful businessman and national series promoter, Paul freely admits that his life has nearly always revolved around motocross. Initially he was a committed competitor, now he's one half of the husband-and-wife team that runs importers and distributors Race FX and – just to crank the involvement levels up another notch – he's also

a Director of the Michelin MX Nationals series.

The Race FX story is one of hard work and hard-earned success with 46-year-old Paul and his wife Sam creating a company from scratch that in 13 years has grown to become one of the major players in the UK off-road world with a big presence in the street scene as well.

The pair were working for Apico when they decided to go it alone and the couple's current 30,000 sq ft HQ and warehouse in Blackburn, Lancashire, is impressive evidence of just how far they've come.

"I was working in another distribution company as Sales Director – I was there for

15 years and learned an enormous amount – and one day just decided I wanted to do something on my own," he says. "When we left there we had no plan at all but very, very quickly it was apparent that I needed to do something and Race FX started within a week. Myself and my wife started it together working from home – that was in August 2003.

"We worked from home for about a year. We had a four-bed home with a big garage and conservatory and filled every room. The garage was full to the ceiling, the bath was full of crash helmets – there really was no more room in the house. It was a quiet cul-de-sac and I think the >>





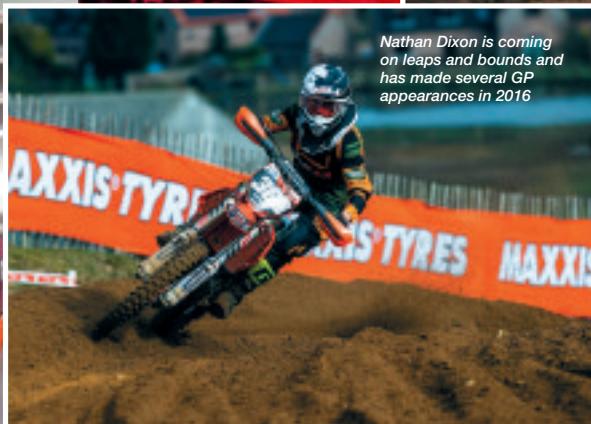
85cc ripper Joel Rizzi comes from a racing family and is on the fast-track to success



Henry Williams is the team's youth contender and also currently leads the MX2 class of the Expert Cup



Nathan Dixon is coming on leaps and bounds and has made several GP appearances in 2016



RFX KTM

Putting something back #1

"We have our own RFX KTM team which is Joel Rizzi, Henry Williams and Nathan Dixon," says Paul. "They ride in everything we sell and produce. Then we sponsor Shaun Simpson with RFX with the Wilvo Virus team so Adam [Sterry] and Shaun use RFX and FLY and half of the top-40 have some involvement with us – we work with a lot of the teams."

"We sponsor a variety of riders and you can guarantee one of them will be winning something so it's handy having Elliot [Spencer] working here who is at all the big races. Every Monday a wide variety of images come back to us that we can use for advertising or social media."

"I just enjoy being involved in helping riders. After 30 years of riding I feel like I've got a bit to offer experience wise and I just enjoy going to the championship races and helping people out."

"I go to pretty much all the British championship rounds, all the MX Nationals, a few GPs and then one or two other events. With all the travelling I do it's not a lot different to when I was riding, it's just a lot easier when I get there. And it's nice on a Monday not to ache like I used to. I didn't think I'd be a very good spectator but, actually, I'm getting better at it. I just enjoy it – I'll watch anything if it's a good race."





Steven Clark
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Image courtesy of Martin Pickard

neighbours were starting to get wound-up with DPD turning up every night and trucks backing down. It wasn't really the place to work from.

"I had a Sprinter van that we filled with stock and I went out at six o'clock every morning to visit dealers, then came back late at night and reloaded the van ready for the same again the next day. But that's how hard you have to work when you start a new business."

"We worked day and night," says Sam. "We had one computer between the two of us so Paul would stop at 5pm and then I'd jump on the computer until sometimes four o'clock the following morning."

With the business expanding beyond all their expectations, Paul and Sam realised they'd outgrown the family home and it was time for some serious investment into the fledgling company.

"I was delivering for about a year and then someone came to work with us and he started going out in the van so I could spend more time on the phones and we progressed to a very small unit. It was only about 2,000 square feet and when we got the keys all our stock went in one corner of it and we thought 'that's it, we'll be here forever, we will never fill this unit' but it just kept snowballing, getting bigger and bigger. More racking, a mezzanine, another >>



PAUL IRWIN

Background check

Like many former motocrossers, Paul's body's cashing cheques he wrote many years ago and he had a hip-replacement operation in 2015 but he's never lost his love of the sport.

"If I could ride I'd still be riding now," he admits. "When it's in your blood it's very hard to give up. Dave Thorpe did a sponsors' day and I went down and rode their bikes about a year ago and that was perfect, like being a factory rider. You turn up and the bike's prepped, you jump on it, ride it around and then give it back. I could do that – I just need a full-time mechanic, I don't want to wash the bikes anymore."

Born and bred in Surrey, Paul grew up around bikes thanks to his father Neil's love of all things mechanical.

"My dad was a mechanic, a trained panel beater, when I was a kid. He did a bit of Formula 1 and Le Mans 24-hour mechanicing. He was also a trials rider – the horizontal champion we used to call him because he was always upside down – and I used to ride around on his tank from section to section."

"Then we went to Cornwall on holiday when I was seven and saw a Castrol sign for a Cornish Schoolboy Scramble Club event so we went to watch and I just fell in love with it. I begged my parents for about a year to buy me a bike and they eventually gave in. It was an Italjet 50 with a metal tank – a proper old thing with a cracked piston ring. My second meeting at Golding Barn I got lapped but I think I finished sixth overall and got a trophy and I was hooked."

While his success as a businessman has overtaken his success as a rider, Paul rode to a very high level – experience that he draws upon

today when it comes to fine-tuning RFX hard parts.

"I raced for 33 years. I did the British championship for about 20 years and raced four or five GPs. I got to ride around Namur which was probably the highlight of my career. I made the top 40 when it was a top 40."

Paul's last British championship season was 2003 and then he switched to the AMCA.

"I enjoyed racing with the AMCA but I was probably a bit disappointed because in '91 and '92 I rode AMCA and finished second in the championship and fourth in the IMBA championship and when I went back I was quite a bit off being there. But it was good fun, very enjoyable."

In his late 30s when he stopped racing motocross, even then Paul wasn't quite ready to hang up his boots and he turned to trials and enduros to get his two-wheeled fix.

"I did British championship enduros for a little while – just Clubman or Expert group – and enjoyed it but it's not the same buzz as motocross. I quite like jumps and there's not many jumps on an enduro loop."

"At one point we had a trials bike, an enduro bike, a motocross bike and a CBR600 in the garage – I think I had one of every Honda all lined up."

"All the lads downstairs have started riding trials and they keep telling me to go and pick one up but I know how easy it is for me to get carried away because I enjoy trials but I ride it like a motocross rider."

Sam's got blurred photographic evidence of one time Paul got 'carried away' – literally – after he competed in the world's most famous trial...

"I did the SSDT in, I think, 2001 and got up to the top of Witches Burn, caught the gear lever and knocked it into neutral and fell back down. I broke my hip and spent a week in hospital. I was really chuffed – I thought I was going to get through Witches Burn with a one! Dougie Lampkin actually carried me out of Witches Burn to the ambulance."



Paul's Italjet provided an early taste of success



Anyone reckon Paul was a bit of a Jeff Leisk fan back in the day?

unit, another unit and before we knew it we had three units – all with mezzanines – and then we added a fourth unit.

"Eventually we purchased this building and it was packed to the rafters in no time. The business basically just snowballed. Obviously, as it snowballed you've got a lot of control of it but we were quite happy to allow it to grow and grow. It's got to the point now where it can't easily grow because this is the building we've got and I don't want to go and look for another building. It's been a long time to get to this stage."

The former print works is an impressive building with a big team keeping Race FX's network of dealers supplied with products including Bell, Fly, Seven, PROX, EVS, Tsubaki, D'Cor graphics, Rip n' Roll, Michelin, DP Brakes, DID, Pro Clean, Pro Grip and NGK. There also the range of own-brand RFX products that go out across the world.

"I guess the core business is an off-road distributor," says Paul. "We supply about a thousand dealers now since we took on Bell helmet. Bell's our biggest-selling product, it generates the most revenue and obviously the market covers street and motocross so it's pretty big."

"The street stuff's pretty new – within the last three years – but before that it was all off-road because that's my passion and where my knowledge lay. The street market is pretty good but it helps that we have such a great product. It would possibly be tougher if we didn't have a product like Bell – it's an iconic brand and it's kind of easyish to sell."

Moving into the street market has proved to be a savvy decision. Once you get into the building and past family pet and unofficial guard dog Poppy – "the Weimaraner that wants to eat people" according to Sam – the warehouse is packed to the rafters with row after row of Bell helmet boxes appearing to take up the lion's share of the orderly racking.

The RFX own-brand products are also proving to be another success story with the range constantly being improved and increased.

"RFX is a hard parts brand," explains Paul, "so sprockets, handlebars, brake pads, levers, launch controls, clutch covers – hard part consumables – and, again, that's growing and we're adding more and more products to it. We've just started two weeks ago with RFX plastics so we do full plastics kits. It's really nice and varied."

"We're the UK distributor for most of the brands that we do and our RFX brand has got 15 distributors around the world. It's mostly European-based – Belgium, Holland, Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Italy – but we sell bits to Australia and we're in talks currently with someone in America."

"RFX is made up of about 10 different suppliers – 10 different factories around the world – and it's quite hard to buy that stuff in and then sell it back to a country like the States that can pretty much do a lot of it the same. Between us and the purchasing guys we've probably got 50-odd years of knowledge in motocross so we add a lot of that to tweak the products to the best of our ability."

"We're very proud of what we've achieved. I can't say we ever planned much past working from home – there was no real plan of 'this is where we want to get to and this is what we need to do'. It just started snowballing and every year we'd sit and go 'wow, that was okay'."

"It's good for me because it's something I absolutely love being involved in and being around but it is seven days a week. There's not a day goes past when you can't think about motocross or motorcycles."

PAUL ON...

Brexit

With the UK having voted just days before our interview to leave the European Union it was the perfect opportunity to ask a successful businessman how he felt about the nation going it alone.

"There's a pretty split decision in this firm about Brexit," he said. "I think it will be tough for a few months and, honestly, after that I think it will be a good thing. We'll come out of it better than we went into it. I think we need to make our own decisions in this country – we're a small island and proud of being a small island and I don't think our decisions need to be made in Europe for us."

"I think [as a nation] we'll renegotiate some trade agreements, the markets will probably open up – no-one can afford not to supply us or sell to us. I don't see it being a bad thing long-term but I think there could be six months to a year of pain first. Hopefully not!"



SAM IRWIN

Background check

Unlike Paul, 40-year-old Sam's background isn't in motocross although she'd already had a thorough grounding in off-road sport by the time she met her future husband.

"I worked for the Awning Company," she says, "which is where I met Jake [Miller] and worked for him with the Dirt Bike Show and looking after Dougie [Lampkin] and Gordon Crockard and people like that and then Vesty poached me."

"That's when me and Paul got together and then Race FX was born – Paul wanted to leave and I said I'd back him and the rest is history.

"My first experience of going to watch motocross was at Valkenswaard, then I found myself watching Paul in farmers' fields and I was like 'hold on, this isn't what I was expecting'!"

"I enjoyed it more when Paul was still riding: We were working from home and doing motocross all week and then Saturdays were spent loading the motorhome up to go racing and then you get back late Sunday night ready to start all over again on Monday morning."

"As it wasn't originally my passion when he started riding enduros I was like 'you know what, if you're going to go off and ride for three hours and I'll see you once then maybe I'll stay at home'."





Graeme Irwin (no relation)
yanks the holey at an
MX Nationals round

MICHELIN MX NATIONALS

Putting something back #2

Now in its third year, the Michelin MX Nationals was launched to fill a big hole in the UK calendar once it became clear to Paul that the Red Bull Pro Nationals wouldn't be returning after the 2013 season.

"I was being asked a lot for sponsorship by riders," he says, "and when I asked them where they were planning to ride it was clear that where they thought they'd be riding the following year wasn't going to exist."

"Riders were saying they needed 20 sprockets and 10 pairs of handlebars and I thought 'as far as I know you've got eight rounds of the British championship to do' – I didn't know where they were going to ride and what the teams were going to do and it became clear they needed another national series."

With his father Neil the man behind one of the country's top circuits, the pair wasted little time in pulling together a blueprint for a new series.

"My father was running Culham so we spoke and started the MX Nationals very quickly. Year one wasn't the best – it was a pretty tough season with lots of things going wrong although a lot was out of our hands – but the series has established itself now and it's in its third year and having a pretty good season."

The series follows similar lines to the RBPN with youth and adult riders sharing centre stage and mixed-capacity, separately-scored Pro classes although Paul maintains this was just the best approach to take rather than simply copying an established format.

"It's common sense approach. I'd never been to a Pro National when the MX Nationals started so I didn't know how it ran. Our Pro race is how it is because there aren't enough good riders to have separate MX1 and MX2."

With the Maxxis championship going to three shortened races, Paul also felt it was important to give riders what he considered to be 'proper' old-school length motos.

"I wanted it to be 30 minutes plus two laps races – the same as the AMA races, the same as the GPs, the same as the European championship – and I wanted British riders to be able to experience that length of time on a bike but there are barely 25 riders that can run at that pace in each group so in order to fill a good line-up it needs to be a combined race. I know there are some riders that don't like it but it does make great racing."

"One of my last Maxxis years I think we did two 25-minute plus two lap races and then a 35 plus two to finish which I remember at Hawkstone was like an enduro for me. But if riders are getting tired after 20 minutes they need to train harder."

"I think 30 minutes is a good test and for me the racing doesn't get boring – the racing's really good for maybe 15 minutes, they might have a five-minute lull in the middle and then the race carries on and the fit ones come through. It's good for the 250s that they start to pass the tired 450 riders at the end. There's always something going on and the racing this year has been phenomenal."

By staging youth classes alongside the adults the series gives the younger riders invaluable experience and also gives them a great shop window to showcase their talents to the professional teams.

"It's a good learning event for the younger riders. They see what the Pros do, they see how the Pros behave. The set-up is that the Pros only ride on the Sunday so we send the Experts out first on the Saturday and they sort of set the lines and then the kids go out and they ride the Expert lines."

"Sunday morning the Pros go out first after the track's been re-prepped and everybody says the track rides

better on the Sunday where the Pros have gone out and just opened the track up and I think that teaches all of the groups the fastest way around the circuit. There's a lot the younger riders can learn."

"It's a great path – if you're a kid you're riding in front of the teams you eventually want to ride for. It gives you a clear sense of where you want to be and judging on how many riders enter the series I guess they understand this and enjoy it."

This progressive element also carries through to the amateur adult riders who can use the series as a stepping stone into the pro ranks and who, for 2017, will be contesting an official ACU championship.

"Our Expert Cup championship will become an official ACU British Expert championship next year. It'll be good for the series and it will be good for all the Experts. The top three MX1 and MX2 Experts in our championship will automatically get into the Maxxis."

"Obviously, in trials there's an Expert championship and in enduro there's an Expert championship but for some reason in motocross since the support championship died there hasn't really been anywhere for the good Experts to go. Where do they ride under ACU organisation? I think it makes sense."

"This year in the Expert championship we were sold out in both classes which proves there's a lot of Experts out there who want to do that. So we'll keep building that and I think it will evolve quite nicely."

"Most of the top Experts in the MX Nationals want to move up to the Pro class but it's not a prerequisite. There are some riders who work full-time and they are happy to remain as Experts and then there are the young lads coming through who are on their way up the ladder and they want to move up. I think we're going to tailor it so if you finish top 25 in the Maxxis the previous year then you have to ride as a pro."

"The balance we have right now seems good and you can see riders progressing. Kieran Banks won it two years ago, Henry Williams is currently winning it and both those guys will go on to be good pros I think. It's a good stepping stone, a good learning curve."

Paul's passion for the series shines through and the same work ethic he and Sam used to build up Race FX is being ploughed into the MX Nationals.

"I'm incredibly hands-on with the series – from deciding where we go to taking entries, putting banners up, putting the track back up when the riders knock it down. Whatever needs doing to make it run smoothly. I want to be proud of what we produce. I want people to go home having enjoyed a really good weekend and got value for money."

"We cater for the best riders in every class, from Small Wheel right through to Pro and they demand well-prepped tracks, nice facilities and we're trying to set that standard. We don't have an unlimited budget so we're trying to create a sustainable championship that will be here for not one or two years but 10 or 20 years."



KING GRAHAM!

LONG LIVE THE KING
OF EXTREME...

Words and photos by Future7Media





Red Bull Romanians is the epitome of adventure for enduro riders. For the past 13 years, the race has seen thousands of competitors pit their skills and nerve against the wilderness of Romania's Carpathian Mountains. Offering competitors four days in the mountains, riders of all ability – from first timers to the very best – are challenged mentally, physically and mechanically.

With 470 riders from 45 different nations entered for 2016, this year's was no different. In fact it was simply stronger than ever. At the sharp end of the results, the race belonged to one man.

Continuing from where he left off at Erzberg, Graham Jarvis rode his way into the record books as a five-time champion after more than 27 hours in the saddle. It was a dominant 35-minute margin of victory that further etched Jarvis' name deeper into Hard Enduro folklore. Long live the King...



GRIMBO'S POV!

How the Red Bull Romaniacs was won . . .

"Winning Red Bull Romaniacs five times is pretty incredible. To win this race once is hard enough so to do it five times in eight years is very special indeed."

"I didn't really approach this one any different than I have done in the past. Obviously I'm cracking on a little in the age department but I know my body. I know what I can do. I felt ready coming into this one. I try to peak for Erzberg and then carry that through into Romaniacs. It's probably strange to peak six months into the year but these are my biggest and most important races – both from a team and personal point of view."

"Ending the opening day over 10 minutes down on Alfredo Gomez was far from ideal. I'll admit that. I knew I had to turn things around really quick. At the Minas Riders in Brazil I wasn't able to do that so I gave it everything I had. The organisers were promising it as the toughest day of the rallye and that was my chance to strike back."

"I started fourth and got the hammer down straight away. Within an hour I was right up there and once we'd cleared the Bermuda

section I was in front. But I had to keep attacking. I needed distance. Sometimes if you ease up you fall back into a slower rhythm. You've got to keep a speed that's just a notch above what everyone else is doing but at the same time know that you can maintain it for the rest of the day. In that particular case, that meant another five hours minimum, even though I didn't know it at the time."

"I made up 20 minutes on day two, enough time to put me about 10 minutes clear but I was the guy leading day three out so I couldn't allow myself to let up otherwise Alfredo, Wade and the guys would be on me again. Turns out day three was just as tough as day two."

"I got going good but after about an hour I could hear a bike. That's a horrible feeling. You think you're riding well but obviously not good enough. Somehow you've got to find a way to step it up. I looked over my shoulder and was relieved a little. It was my team-mate Mario Roman and he was alone."

"To be fair he was riding well, ace for his first time at this race but not quite in the hunt for the overall win. We stuck together for a bit as I sort of regrouped. I decided to stay in front as we had a couple of snotty bits before the service point to deal with and it's always best to be in front for those."

"Between my mechanic Damo and myself, we worked out the time differences during the service point. Then I got my head down

and went back to work. There's no real way of knowing if you're making time up or not. There's no live feedback. It's just you against the mountain with the hope that no one catches you up. It's only when you reach the finish line that you see the clock tick as you wait for the next rider to roll in."

"To be fair that day went well, as good as a day can go at Romaniacs. I had no real major stoppers and I pretty much kept my wheels moving the whole way through. And that's the biggest thing about this race. Keep moving. Keep making forward progress. Entering the final day with 27 minutes in hand over Alfredo was a huge relief. Barring any unforeseen happenings, I had this one – I just had to ride it out for another 150 kilometres."

"Arriving into the final finishing arena as the winner never gets old for me. The pain, hardship, ups and downs of the previous few days instantly disappear. There's the relief that it's over for another year, followed by the feeling of wanting a few more miles riding but then the emotion of winning takes over."

"With a lean couple of years at Romaniacs it was special to get back on the top step of the podium. I lost out last year by two minutes to Jonny Walker so this year doing the job by 35 minutes is huge. With Erzberg and now Romaniacs, 2016 is being very kind indeed. I just want to keep this momentum rolling and see where it takes me."



HANDY ANDY!

Noakley nobbles the Silver class

DBR: Congratulations Andy, how does it feel to be Red Bull Romaniacs Silver Class winner!

AN: "Thanks, can you believe it? I can't! It's incredible – I don't think I've ever won anything in my life!"

DBR: It's one heck of a result. How's the body feeling now?

AN: "Numb! At this moment I feel numb. When I'm riding I feel okay but when I stop I begin to seize up. That was four long days in the mountains – we've raced for over 24 hours. I've never ridden a bike that much in my life before."

DBR: You dominated by winning each of the off road days. Was that the game plan?

AN: "Honestly I had no expectations coming here – I just wanted to reach the finish. When I rode the prologue I thought my fitness was way off – I felt dead and on the verge of puking. But once we got into the mountains I felt different. It was more me."

DBR: How did the days go?

AN: "I pushed hard on day one and when I got to the service point I was told I was 15 minutes ahead. I didn't know what to do then, whether I should back it off or not. I then messed up because I've got no in-between speed – I'm either super slow or fast. I ended up losing those 15 minutes and won by only 18 seconds. I put the hammer down from start-to-finish on day two and won by 20 minutes. Day three I ended up riding with Angus MacDonald, who was second overall, for the day but it was okay because I knew then I had a good lead on him. After that I just tried to bring it home."

DBR: How does Silver compare to the Gold class?

AN: "I've tried Gold before but literally got nowhere. Silver is more my level. It's bloody hard but it has a limit of hardness, whereas in Gold anything goes. Sometimes the tracks overlap quite a bit before Gold goes off on an extra tangent and you can see where the Gold riders have been pushing so you know you've got to do a bit of that too. I'm definitely glad I've rode Silver. It's a more realistic category for me. There's more nice riding than complete hardship. I'd say ride Silver at least once before giving Gold a go."





THE INJURY BENCH

Walker and Bolton sidelined

The rate of attrition was high for this year's Red Bull Romaniacs. It claimed quite a few riders, none more notable than defending champion Jonny Walker and Paul Bolton. Both riders exited early on day one through injury.

For Walker, Romaniacs marked a short lived return to competitive action following four months on the injury bench due to his broken leg sustained on SuperEnduro duty back in March. A crash on off-road day one flared up that injury once more and he was forced to call a halt to proceedings just three hours in.

"Making the call to stop was a really tough decision to make," explains Walker. "It's definitely not the way I expected things to go in Romania."

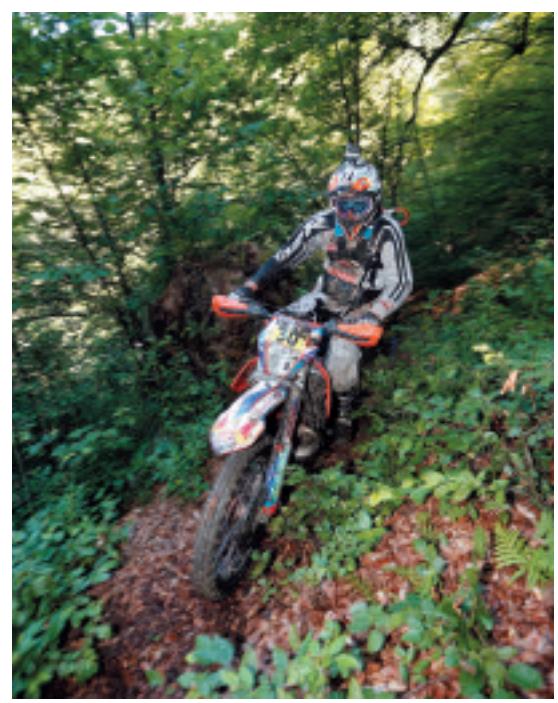
"I was riding okay, I was with a group of riders and just trying to find my flow and not do anything above that. I had a crash early on which unnerved me and just as I was getting back into it again I hit a tree stump hidden in the grass. I'd no chance, I was a passenger."

"The crash was awkward and I caught my leg in the process. Immediately I knew I was hurt again. I limped on but it was no good. Right now we've got to get this sorted out before I can come back."

As Walker was having his problems, so too was Bolton. Suffering from blurred vision and an increasingly sore neck, Bolton was way off his normal regular self.

"I don't really know what happened," said Bolton. "I can't quite pin point it. I didn't crash but maybe jarred my neck somehow. Riding along I couldn't really move my neck and my eyes felt blurry and it kept getting worse and worse. I had no option but to stop, it wasn't safe."

Undergoing CT scans, it was initially thought that he'd ruptured a disc in his neck but following another check with a specialist in Munich there is no major damage. Speedy recovery, guys.



BILLY GRYLLS

Billy Bolts' Romaniacs Adventure

Red Bull Romaniacs always delivers tails of adventure and survival. The wilderness of the Carpathian Mountains often sees competitors harness their inner Bear Grylls skills somewhere along the line. Those attempting the race for their very first time are most susceptible to the hidden traps that lurk in the forests. Making his debut ride in Romaniacs, Billy Bolt was once such rider who almost spent a night in the woods with the bears and wolves...

"I was riding along this ridge on a Gold class section on day one. I wasn't doing anything wild or stupid," explains Bolt. "There was this stick in my path and for some reason it was all I could focus on. I hit it and it fired me off the ledge and about 10 metres off the track and down the banking with my bike.

"I could still see the track but I couldn't get back up. I just kept slipping down the bank. I was told if this happens – go downhill where you'll find a path to get you going again. No such luck!"

"I tried to make my way down, then caused a mini avalanche of rocks, then spent another hour getting down to the edge of this lake only to find out I was completely trapped. There was no way out. I had to ring for help."

"About six hours later my Dad and Julian Stevens finally found me. We spent an hour hiking our way out, trying to avoid falling down this 40 foot banking into the lake. It was the scariest thing ever!"



SIBIU SIDENOTES!

Romaniacs bits n' bobs

- Great Britain was the most represented nation at Red Bull Romaniacs with over 100 riders entered.
- Eurotek KTM and Desert Rose provided bike transport and servicing to look after the majority of those Brits.
- There were two British winners - Graham Jarvis (Gold) and Andy Noakley (Silver).
- 35 minutes was Jarvis' winning margin following 27 hours four minutes and 55 seconds of racing.
- Jonny Walker, Paul Bolton and Dan Hemingway were among the first top riders to exit day one with injury.
- Ben Hemingway, Jonathan Richardson and Billy Bolt eventually followed them as retirements.
- South African Kirsten Landman became the first female rider to ever finish Red Bull Romaniacs in Silver.

- With four riders in the top 11 of Gold, South Africa was the top performing nation.
- Red Bull Romaniacs is the new SlimFast diet – Alfredo Gomez burnt off the equivalent of 70 pints of beer during the four days of racing.
- Both under the age of 20, New Zealand brothers Angus and Hamish MacDonald are future Hard Enduro stars placing 2-3 in Silver.
- He might be the veteran of the field but Mark Jackson proved he ain't no slouch with fourth overall in Silver.
- Joe Chambers placed 13th in Silver at his first attempt placing as high as fourth on day two.
- Romanian Emanuel Gyenes has finished all 13 editions of the Romaniacs. In 2016, he was 12th in Silver.
- With a 75 per cent finishers record, 157 competitors completed Bronze.
- Of the 45 nations entered, Namki Lee of South Korea was one of the furthest travelled.

RESULTS

Gold class

1 Graham Jarvis (Husqvarna) 27:04:55, 2 Alfredo Gomez (KTM) 27:40:23, 3 Wade Young (Sherco) 27:45:29 4. Mario Roman (Husqvarna) 28:07:48, 5 Scott Bouverie (KTM) 30:42:45...

Silver Class

1 Andy Noakley (KTM) 21:58:47, 2 Angus MacDonald (Sherco) 22:40:28, 3 Hamish MacDonald (Sherco) 23:07:43, 4 Mark Jackson (KTM) 24:02:15, 5 Jesus Zavala (KTM) 24:24:40... 13 Joe Chambers (KTM) 25:46:16... 15 Ben Wibberley (Husqvarna)... 22 Neil Flockhart (Sherco)... 27:26:14, 45 Jack Barwick (KTM) 37:27:31... 60 Mark Kirby (KTM) 22:25:56... 70 Chris Heath (KTM) 28:42:30...

Bronze Class

1 Miroslav Culka (KTM) 18:17:15, 2 Tonu Kallast (KTM) 18:50:46, 3 Toomas Triisa (KTM) 19:01:09... 10 James Jackson (KTM) 20:23:11... 13 James Nicholls (KTM) 20:35:25... 21 Lee Corbett (KTM) 21:07:51... 26 Keith Jenkins (KTM) 21:27:31... 30 Paul Westgarth (KTM) 21:44:00... 44 Lee Walters (Husqvarna) 22:57:00... 50 Ian Worrall (KTM) 23:50:56...

Iron Class

1 Hernandez Panos (KTM) 16:11:38, 2. Marcel Vogel (KTM) 16:32:04, 3 Fernando Hernandez (KTM) 17:14:55... 11 Gareth Leonard (KTM) 19:41:43... 13 Richard Main (KTM) 20:12:49... 18 Max Hunt (KTM) 20:41:44, 19 Mike Fredriksen (KTM) 20:48:25... 21 Patrick Robinson (KTM) 20:55:07... 27 Brian Roper (KTM) 6:19:54... 33 John Dene (KTM) 24:01:42... 43 Rob Baron (KTM) 21:22:04... 47 Paul McKie (KTM) 43:23:10...

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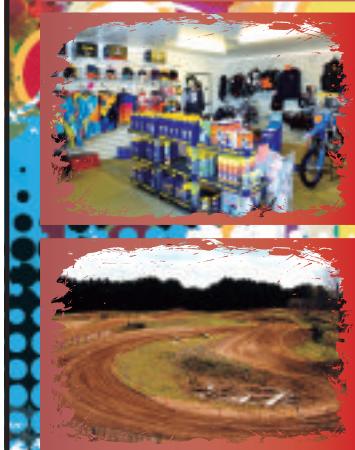
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With bulging youth line ups season long in all classes the series is as popular as ever – none more so than in the Autos. On the weekend at Howton Court, Freddie Bartlett claimed three 50cc wins from four and the overall victory. Shaun Mahoney nicked the race win as Bartlett's bars worked themselves loose. Bartlett is one round down in the championship chase and consequently the title seems to be heading the way of long time red plate holder Mahoney.

In the 65s an awesome show from Lewis Roden saw him romp home first in four heats and finish second in the other. After missing out on round one Roden is well out of the title hunt and with Keelan Hope still making up some lost ground it's Tyler Smith who tops the table. Smith has a 34 point lead over George Goodfellow, Hope is 35 off top spot and the title can go any one of three ways.

Guest rider Ollie Davidson was the runaway victor in the Smallies but in the championship stakes it's Ben Watkins who rules. Claiming the red plate

with victory at round two, Watkins has gone from strength to strength in his quest for the crown. A meagre 24 points dropped over all five rounds means he's now 79 points clear of round one winner Harrison McCann.

Running with the theme of outstanding front runners who have dominated the series none have done that better than Callum Beekan. A clean sweep at Pontrilas underlines his championship winning potential while further improving his series statistics that now read four rounds won, 13 moto wins secured and impressively just 16 points lost. James Hanscomb who was on the podium as runner-up in Herefordshire was the other round winner – together they have scooped all the heat wins and Hanscomb is hanging on in the title chase. That said, he's 65 points adrift and his hopes are surely slim. Marshall Smith is third in the championship chase but was narrowly nudged off the Pontrilas podium by a great James Hyett show – Hyett actually finishing tied on points

with Hanscomb...

In the Senior section it was wild card runner Deon Thomas who scooped the overall glory at Ponty. In the championship Owen Woodhouse has hit a top three points return at every round but after being the top points scorer at the last two rounds he now has a 98 point lead and he's red hot for a National crown. Jack Samuel finished as the second best points scorer in front of Ryan Manley at Pontrilas but in the title chase it's the other way around with Manley 42 points to the good over Samuel.

With just 11 points covering the top three in the Senior Open section this one should go right down to the wire. At round five it finished with Ieuan Harris on top step as guest rider Josh Greedy took podium second. Harris claimed the series lead depositing previous leader John McKenzie as Brooklyn Evans made the podium again. Evans holds championship third and all three, Harris, McKenzie and Evans go for gold at Penybont September 3/4.



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Ben Watkins is the man to
beat in the Smallies



George Goodfellow
is second in the 65cc
title chase

Jacob Harley



Shaun Mahoney
leads the chasing
Auto class pack

SERIES STANDINGS

Autos

- 1 Shaun Mahoney 849, 2 Freddie Bartlett 749,
- 3 Jonas Brown 683, 4 Regan Rodges 682,
- 5 Harvey Jackson 672, 6 Ben Casey 666

Junior 65cc

- 1 Tyler Smith 785, 2 George Goodfellow 751,
- 3 Keelan Hope 750, 4 Jack Viner 661,
- 5 Jacob Harley 647, 6 Adam Thomas 618

SW85cc

- 1 Ben Watkins 876, 2 Harrison McCann 797,
- 3 Billy Duke 761, 4 Matt Tolley 715,
- 5 Ethan Sills 660, 6 Charlie Griffiths 645

BW85cc

- 1 Callum Beekan 884, 2 James Hanscomb 819,
- 3 Marshall Smith 763, 4 Billy Jones 725,
- 5 James Hyett 719, 6 Finley Smith 667

Senior

- 1 Owen Woodhouse 872, 2 Ryan Manley 774,
- 3 Jack Samuel 732, 4 Harry Williams 675,
- 5 Dean Palmer 670, 6 Aaron Powell 655

Senior Open

- 1 Ieuan Harris 805 pts, 2 John McKenzie 796,
- 3 Brooklyn Evans 794, 4 Adam Hill 705,
- 5 Morgan McConnell 646, 6 Frazer Edmundson 619



65cc class supremo Tyler Smith



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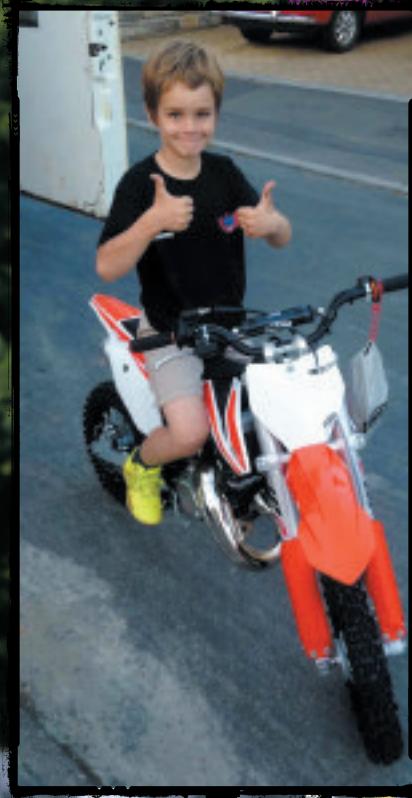
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SPOTLIGHT ON...

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With the growing popularity of the 50cc Auto class that now has two national titles up for grabs – BSMA and MCF – it's easier than ever to spot the stars of the future.

The latest ripper to create a buzz about the paddock is Freddie Bartlett. Starting this championship year as a raw six year old with just one day of National racing experience in his locker, young Freddie has been an absolute revelation, some might say sensation.

So far in 2016 he's done five Nationals – four BSMA and one MCF – and he's topped the box at four and was runner-up in the other scoring a grand total of 13 moto wins. With nothing worse than a third place finish all season long it's pretty safe to say he's just about roasted and toasted everyone. He's already seen as the best 50cc racer in the country and he's only just hit seven.

In the BSMA Bridgestone series opener at Brookthorpe, Freddie topped the box as a six year old but then bust a wrist in a knock about game of football. This meant he missed out on round two at Wroxton. The sand at FatCat MP for round three was a totally new experience having never ridden deep sand before but two race wins and second overall resulted.

Learning fast and gaining plenty from every outing, the next three Nationals – Warmingham Lane

and Pontrilas (BSMA) and Brookthorpe (MCF this time) – all saw Freddie race to magnificent overall victories. With just the final round of the Bridgestone championship to come Fred's sitting in series second and it's obvious to say had it not been for a football kicked at him he surely would have been odds on for a National crown.

If you're not already convinced about Freddie's talent his latest episode of ripping up the rule book was at Verdon in France where he won the Masterkids title. Fastest in his group qualification, two wins on the way to his gold final – this was no way a lucky win, Freddie B was supremely the best claiming his first major piece of silverware, surely the first of many! And as his dad quipped "It's quite cool when the Yanks are asking for your boy's top."

Back in 2008 Rage came across a raw eight year old named Conrad Mewse and we told you to remember the name. Eight years on and we're saying it again about FB #292. No pressure then Freddie Bartlett!

Freddie's dad – and a former top racer himself – Seb Bartlett gave us a little insight into Freddie's little world...

"I know I would say this wouldn't I but Freddie really is one of the most chilled kids around – nothing has seemed to phase him at all so far and he's just taking it all in his stride. Up until he was three I was

still competing so I guess he picked up the racing bug from me and even at a young age Freddie showed an amazing skill and balance on anything with wheels on.

"Up until now I've been Freddie's trainer and it's working well. I don't ever push him to do anything he doesn't want. A few trainers have approached us and asked about Freddie but to be perfectly honest it's a financial cost we just can't justify at the moment. All the funds go into keeping Freddie on track and without the backing of our real good mate Kevin Gibbs we would have struggled – I can't thank Kev enough.

"Freddie's a big unit for his age and we're still not sure if it's going to be Autos or 65s next year – we'll sort that out over the winter months."

Rage: We also hear Freddie has travelled around a bit already?

SB: "Yeah, his mum Anna is Swedish, Freddie was born in Sweden and he has a Swedish passport too. We moved back to Newquay but then with Freddie needing to practice more we decided to move again to Somerset. The cost of diesel travelling from Cornwall to find good practice tracks was a real killer..."

ARE YOU **Judd** ENOUGH?

RAGE IN ASSOCIATION WITH WWW.JUDDRACING.COM



YAMAHALERS!

DBR's lab monkey Ryan Houghton gets to grips with the 2017 YZ-Fs in sunny Italy while Geoff Walker takes brand-new enduro bikes from Husqvarna and Beta for a walk in the woods. And we'll have exclusive interviews with off-road legends Graham Jarvis and Malcolm Rathmell and tarmac terrorist Sam Lowes. Plus there'll be a bunch more stuff we haven't got around to planning just yet. See y'all next month!



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A dynamic photograph of a motocross rider in mid-air, performing a jump. The rider is wearing a full protective gear, including a helmet with goggles, a white and orange racing jersey with various sponsor logos like Putoline, Apico, and Rockstar Energy, and blue pants. The motorcycle is white with blue and yellow accents. The background is blurred, suggesting speed and motion.

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